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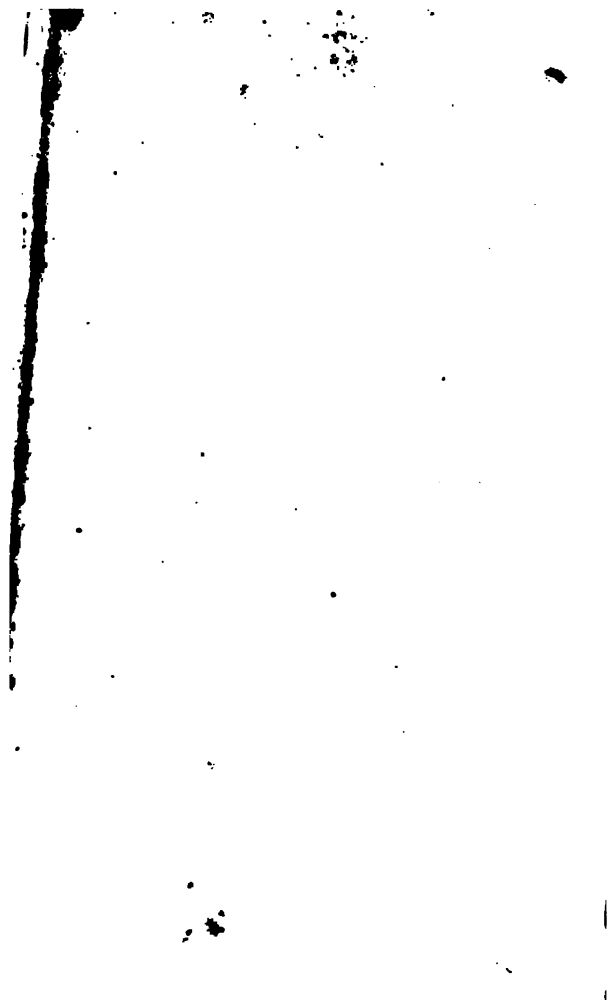
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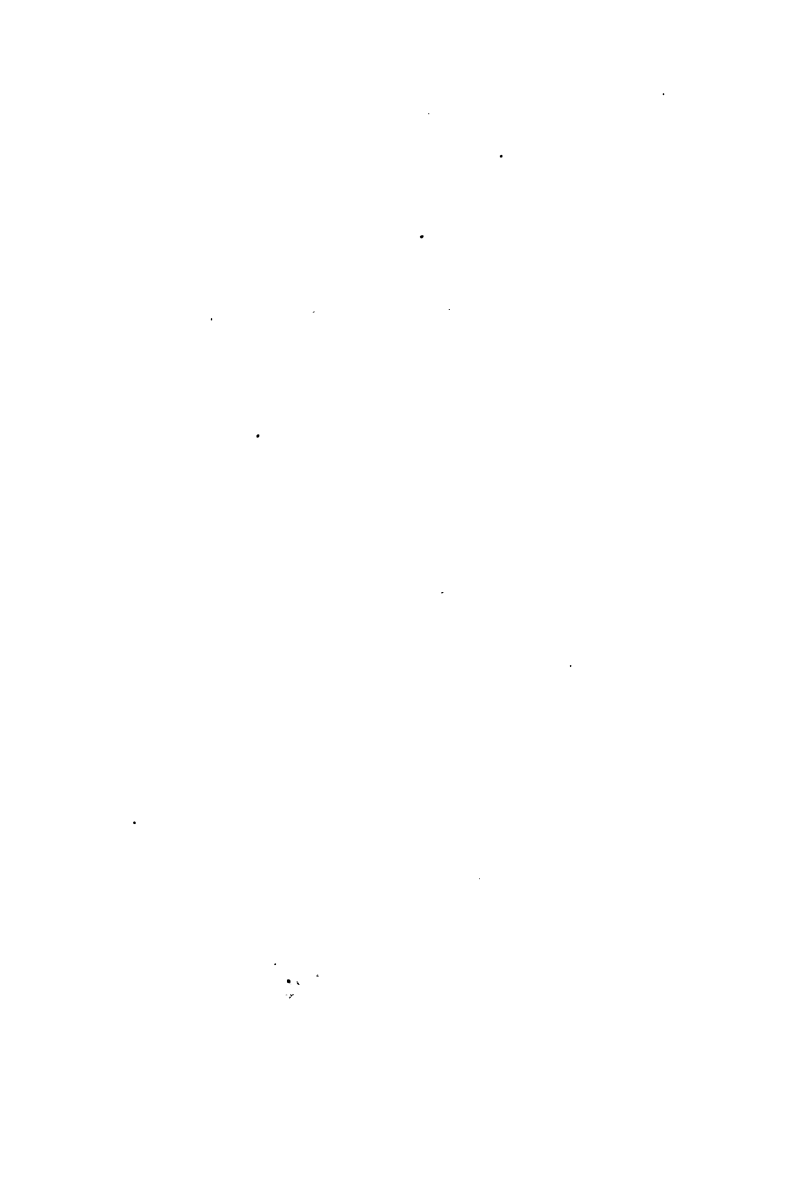
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CABINET PICTURES
OF
ENGLISH LIFE.

CHAUCER.
BY JOHN SAUNDERS.



LONDON:
CHARLES KNIGHT & CO., LUDGATE STREET.

1845.

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Printed by **WILLIAM CLOWES and Sons,**
Stamford Street.



NOTICE.

THIS is the first of a Series which may be continued occasionally in the Weekly Volumes. The great writers are the best describers of National Manners in periods which are past. Those who are familiar with our Literature have keys to History which cannot be acquired by the perusal of the mere chronicles. What annalist of the stirring times of the Plantagenets can show us the inner life of the English people, as *Chaucer* shows us? Who has caught the spirit of the early days of the Reformation to be compared with *Shelton*? How much more from *Ben Jonson* and *Dekker* and *Massinger*, and the crowd of Dramatists of that age, do we know of the peculiarities of the times of Elizabeth and James than from Camden and Wilson. *Pepys* and *Evelyn* disclose to us very curious secrets of the days after the Restoration. *Defoe* is the painter of the Manners of the common people in the times of William and Anne. Congreve

in imitating not only Chaucer's language and style, but in embodying so much of the original author's spirit into his version, is so great, that we should not be surprised to find Chaucer speedily dividing with Shakspeare the admiration and attention of our critical brethren in Germany."

But why is it that Chaucer has been thus neglected in his own country? Not, certainly, on account of his occasional grossness; for all his serious tales, and some of his humorous, are unobjectionable on this score. Neither do we think that it is owing to any *inherent* or *irremediable* difficulties connected with Chaucer's verse; though were these as real as is commonly assumed, there would be what we may term great poetical injustice in doing so little for Chaucer, who has done almost everything for us; who not only created for us a national poetry, but restored to us a national tongue. It is, we believe, simply this—that the people, the many, who, added to the "few," form the only "fit" audience for so robust and comprehensive an intellect as Chaucer's, have, in truth, had no opportunities of making his acquaintance. The cheapest editions of Chaucer have been as much beyond their pockets, as the works themselves, in most of those editions, have been beyond their ready intellectual comprehension, on account of their antique garb: hence the prevailing notion of the difficulty of understanding the language in which they are written.

Now what would have been Shakspeare's fate under such treatment? What would his popularity and influence have been now, as compared *with what they are*, if there had been no thea-

to make him known to his humbler countrymen? if none but the wealthier classes had been able to purchase his published works? if his editors had preserved the old, and to our eyes, uncouth style of spelling? or if, in a word, he had been kept carefully preserved as a pet of the "circles," instead of being allowed to become the pride and glory of the nation? Yet not only has Chaucer been thus situated, but—to make matters worse—by the preservation of *his* old spelling, the superficial difficulties attending the right understanding of his frequently obsolete pronunciation have been most materially enhanced.

What is now to be done? We cannot turn back suddenly the current of a people's thoughts and tastes, any more than we can suddenly compel a river to return to its source; but we may gradually wind back to the place that may not be directly reached; and in order to induce English readers to venture upon this noble pilgrimage, we may make the *way* as convenient and agreeable as possible. The following pages must be looked upon as an humble attempt to aid in this good work.

We have spoken of "difficulties." These, we think, may be entirely got rid of, without any innovation on the poet's own words or probable modes of pronunciation. A glossary at the foot of each page, modern spelling where practicable, and a careful accentuation of the words, which, in accordance with the principles that guided Chaucer in its composition, require to be differently pronounced than at present, will enable any reader of ordinary intelligence to enjoy this fine old poet in *something like his own admirable dress*. It is true,

CABINET PICTURES

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CHAUCER.

INTRODUCTION.

IN an age when it has been discovered that the most popular of all poets has been hitherto very inadequately appreciated, we need not be surprised to find that there is another poet hardly less fitted for popularity, and belonging to the same mighty class of originators, whose works are seldom seen but in the hand of the literary student, or on the shelves of the well-appointed library. Are we then waiting for our German brethren to teach us to *read* Chaucer, as they have already done much to make us *understand* Shakspeare? It should seem so; and that our continental benefactors are already in training for the task. We are informed by a writer in a recent number of the 'Foreign Quarterly Review,' that the gigantic labour of translation has just been *accomplished* by Edward Fiedler, whose "success

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"But first I pray you of your courtesy,
 That ye ne arrette it not my villainy,
 Though that I plainly speak in this matiere,
 To tellen you their wordes, and their cheer,
 Ne though I speak their wordes properly;
 For this ye knowen *all* so well as I,
 Who *so* shall tell a tale after a man,
 He must rehearse, as nigh as ever he can,
 Every word, if it be in his charge;
 All speak he never so rudely and so large.
 Or else he muste tellen his tale untrue,
 Or feignen things, or finden wordes new."

To this specimen of Chaucer suppose we now add another. Did glorious John, we wonder, ever pause to reflect upon the style of this passage, among countless others of equal excellence?

"I say for me, it is a great disease,
 Where as men have been in great wealth and ease,
 To hearken of their sudden fall, alas!
 And the contrary is joy and great solas;
 As when a man hath been in poor estate,
 And climbeth up, and waxeth fortunate,
 And there abideth in prosperity,
 Such thing is gladsome, as it thinketh me."

If this be not majestic music married to immortal poesy, we do not know what is.

The reader can now partially appreciate the force of Dryden's statement as to Chaucer's language, which, he says, "is so obsolete, that his sense is scarce to be understood;" or his kind apology for Chaucer, "he lived in the infancy of our poetry;" or his liberal and generous assurance, "yet many of his verses consist of ten syllables, and the words *not much* behind our present English."

SECTION I.

A VISIT TO THE TABARD.

“THE two names which perhaps do the greatest honour to the annals of English literature are those of Chaucer and Shakspeare. After the dramas of Shakspeare, there is no production of man that displays more various and vigorous talent than the ‘*Canterbury Tales*.’ Splendour of narrative, richness of fancy, pathetic simplicity of incident and feeling, a powerful style in delineating character and manners, and an animated vein of comic humour, each takes its turn in this wonderful performance, and each in turn appears to be that in which the author was most qualified to succeed.” Thus writes Godwin, in the preface to his *Life of the poet*, reviewing generally the characteristics of the great father of English poetry; but elsewhere, noticing that particular quality which more than any other stamps Chaucer’s productions, he calls him emphatically “*the poet of character and manners* :” it is in that light we here propose to view him.

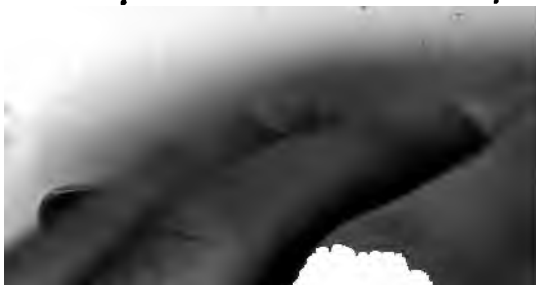
The ‘*Canterbury Tales*’ are preceded by a prologue, in which the plot and characters are shown, and which thus begins; the poet in his own person being the narrator:—

“Whenne that April with his show’res sote,*
 The drought of March hath piercèd to the root,
 And bathed every vein in such liquór
 Of which virtúe engendered is the flow’r;

* Sweet.



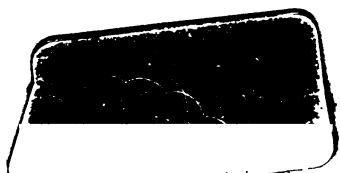
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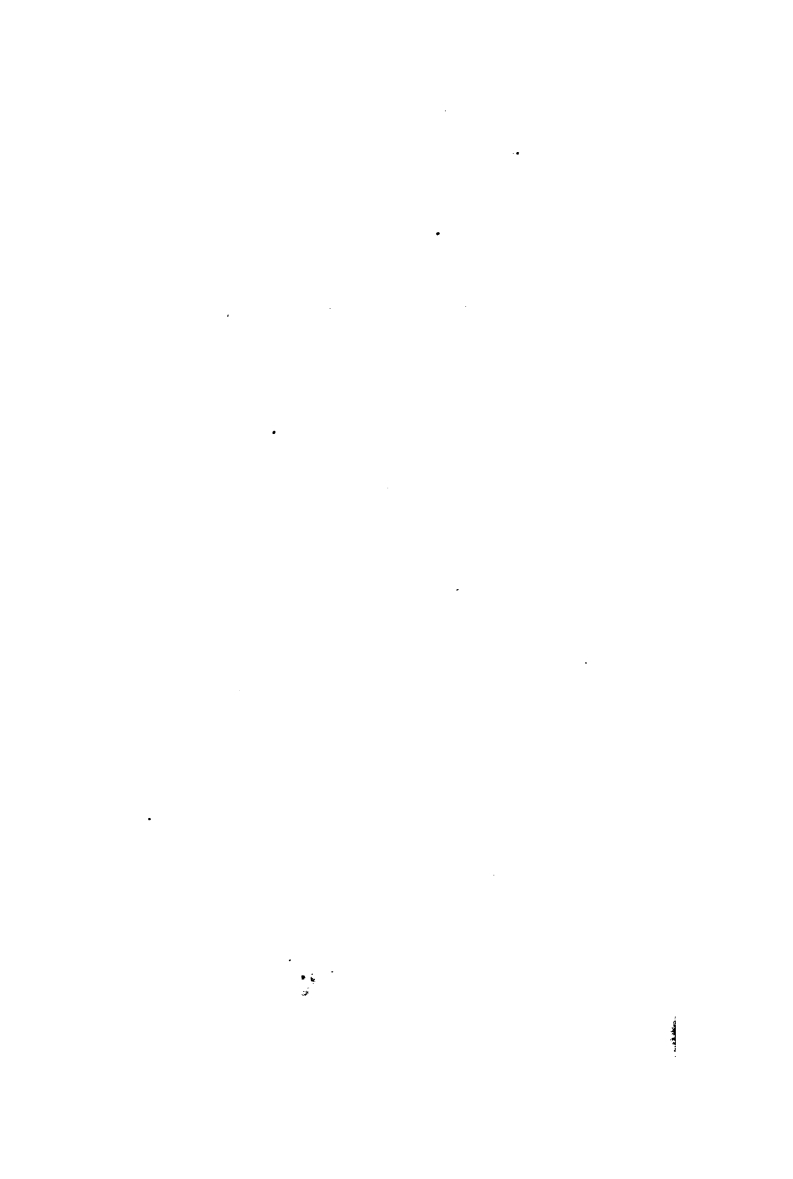


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sex, and Kent,—who were here as contiguous to the “silent highway” as they could desire, and at the same time more pleasantly lodged than they could be in the densely-populated metropolis,—made it early famous for its inns. After the murder and canonization of Becket, the number of persons continually setting out on pilgrimages to his shrine at Canterbury, contributed still further to the increase and prosperity of these houses of entertainment. Stow, several centuries later (in 1598), alludes to them in such a way as to show that they then formed a principal feature of the High Street: “In Southwark be many fair inns for receipt of travellers;” and he then proceeds, “amongst the which the most ancient is the Tabard, so called of the sign, which as we now term it, is of a jacket or sleeveless coat, whole before, open on both sides, with a square collar, winged at the shoulders: a stately garment of old time, commonly worn of noblemen and others, both at home and abroad in the wars; but then (to wit in the wars) their arms embroidered, or otherwise depict upon them, that every man by his coat of arms might be known from others. But now these tabards are only worn by the heralds, and be called their coats of arms in service.” This “most ancient” then of the inns of Southwark, even in 1598—this great rival of our Boar’s Heads and Mermaids, which, older than either, has survived both—is situated immediately opposite what was formerly called St. Margaret’s Hill (though now perfectly level), then the site of St. Margaret’s Church, now of the Town-hall of the Borough. The exterior of the inn is simply a



tioned as a fact the circumstance recorded in the inscription, and in language so very similar, that we cannot but think the inscription was in his mind at the time of writing: "This was the hostelry where Chaucer and the other pilgrims met together, and with Henry Bailly, their host, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury, &c." The date also, 1383, is precisely that which best agrees with the details of the poem and the known period of its composition, the latest historical event mentioned in it being Jack Straw's insurrection in 1381, and the poem itself having been composed somewhere between that year and the close of the century. We are, therefore, fully at liberty to believe, if we please, that the inscription (and consequently the poem) records, or rather is founded on, a real fact; and we may strengthen that belief by remembering how much of the real, as well as the ideal, pervades the entire structure of the 'Canterbury Tales,' making it impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins. We cannot do better than believe Chaucer's narration implicitly.

The state of the gateway presents but a too faithful type of the general state of the inn. Its patchings and alterations, its blackened doors and bursting ceiling, and its immense cross-beams, tell us, in language not to be mistaken, of antiquity and departed greatness. From the gateway the yard is open to the sky, and gradually widens. On either side is a range of brick buildings, extending for some little distance; opposite the end of that on the right, the left-hand range is *continued by the most interesting part of the Tabard,*

a stone-coloured wooden gallery on the first floor, which, in its course making a right angle, presents its principal portion directly opposite the entrance from the High Street. It is supported by plain thick round pillars, also of wood; and it supports on other pillars of a slenderer make, in front, the bottom of the very high and sloping tiled roof. Offices, with dwellings above, occupy the left range as far as the gallery, beneath which are stables; whilst under the front portion of the gallery is a waggon-office, with its miscellaneous packages lying about; and suggesting thoughts of the time when as yet road-waggon, properly so called, were unknown, and the carriers, with their strings of pack-horses and jingling bells, filled the yard with their bustle and obstreperous notes of preparation for departure. Immediately over this office, in the centre of the gallery, is a picture, said to be by Blake, and "well painted,"* of the Canterbury Pilgrimage, though now so dirty or decayed that the subject itself is hardly discernible. The buildings on the right are principally occupied by the bar, tap-room, parlour, &c., of the present inn: to these, therefore, we shall for convenience give that appellation, although the gallery and stables also still belong to it. From the inn, then, originally stretched across to the gallery a bridge of communication, balustraded, we may be sure, like the gallery, and arched over like the similar bridge still existing in another part of the yard. The proofs of this connecting bridge are exhibited on the wall of the inn, in the blackened ends of the

* Gentleman's Magazine, 1812.

row of horizontal planks, set edge-wise, which once supported it, and in the door, now walled up, to which it led, that opened into a large room, extending quite through the depth of the inn-buildings. On turning the corner of the right-hand range, we find in the same line, but standing considerably back, the lofty stables; and scarcely can we enter the doors, before—as our eye measures their extraordinary size—we acknowledge the truth of Chaucer's description: we are almost satisfied this must have been the place he saw. They are, indeed, "wide." On the same side is another range of buildings, continued into another open yard behind; on the opposite side projects the end of the gallery; and here we find the other bridge we have mentioned connecting the two sides, and which is in a most ruinous-looking state. The great extent of the original inn may be conceived when we state that there is little doubt but that it occupied the whole yard, with all its numerous buildings; for, from one of the houses in the High Street, standing on the north side of the gateway, a communication is still traceable through all the intermediate tenements to the gallery; from thence, at its furthest extremity, across the bridge to the stables, and back again to the present inn; and, lastly, from thence right through to the High Street once more—to the house on the South side of the gateway.

Let us now walk into the interior. The master of the inn, of whom we may say, with a slight alteration of Chaucer's words—

"A seemly man our hostè is withal,"—

nes us at the door, and kindly and patiently
s us into all its hidden mysteries. Passing
hasty glance the bar in front—the parlour
with its blackened roof and its polished
—the tap-room on the left—the low door-
winding passages, broken ceilings, and pro-
; chimney-arches which everywhere meet the
we follow our conductor through a narrow
and are startled to find ourselves upon what
s, from its very contrast to all around, a
ficiently broad staircase, with a handsome fir
rade in perfect condition, and with landings
enough to be converted into bed-rooms. On
st floor is a door on each side: that on the
mmunicating with one room after another,
u reach the one overlooking the bustle of the
Street; and that on the right leading to the
room formerly opening out upon the bridge.
s room, which is of considerable size, there
e marks of a cornice yet visible on the ceil-
On the second story, the contrast is almost
ous between the noble staircase and the nar-
edrooms, pushed out from within by an im-
bulk of masonry, which (enclosing a stack
mneys) occupies the central space; and forced
n without by the boldly sloping roof: in fact,
were evidently not intended for each other.
changes induced by decay, accidents, and,
all, by a gradually contracting business,
has caused the larger rooms and wide pas-
to be divided and subdivided, as convenience
oted or necessity required, may account for
discrepancies. The buildings of the opposite
have evidently been to a certain extent of a
bonding nature. These manifold changes

have produced a "Tabard" very different from that of the memorable April night, when—

"The *chambers* and the *stables* weren wide ;"

and the whole body of pilgrims, numerous as they were, found entertainment of the "best."

Stepping across the central part of the yard the gallery, we ascend by a staircase, also "showing of its fair proportions." As we mount the stairs our eyes are attracted by a retired modest-looking latticed window, peeping out upon the landings and in different parts of the gallery are passages leading to countless nests of rooms, forming (perhaps many of them did of old) the dormitories of the inn. In the centre of the gallery, immediately behind the picture, is a door opening into a lofty passage, with a room on each side: that on the right is, as our host announced to us, "the *Pilgrims' room*" of tradition. With due reverence we looked upon its honoured walls, its squarish chimney-piece, and the panel above reaching to the ceiling, upon which there was till recently so much ancient needlework or tapestry, cut out from a larger work, representing, it is said, a procession to Canterbury, and which probably in the days of its splendour adorned the walls of this very room. The size, however, of the place, we confess, did not exactly accord with our ideas of the hall of the ancient Tabard. The depth from wall to window was satisfactory, so was the height; the latticed window itself was large and antique in its expression, notwithstanding the alterations it had certainly experienced; but the *length* of the room—so much less than its depth—appeared, say the least of it, extraordinary. We went

the room on the other side of the passage, which, with a similar window, of similar depth and height, was still shorter; but that our host explained—he had cut off a third room beyond. We went to this, and there found an exactly corresponding fireplace and panel, in the exactly corresponding corner to those of the first room. Could the whole three have formed one room? Our host was struck with the idea. There was certainly a great difficulty in the way; the intervening door, passage, and staircase, with a portion of the ancient balustrade, apparently still remaining. We could not, however, avoid again expressing our belief that such was the case. Scarcely had the words passed our lips when the host called out, with as much pleasure in his tones as we can imagine there must have been in his great progenitor's when he announced his famous scheme to the pilgrims, "You are right; where the door now is, there has been a third window." True enough, there were the undeniable evidences of a middle window, half of its outlines visible in the wall agreeing in height and dimensions with those on either side, and the remainder cut away by the door. Were further proof wanting, it exists in the staircase itself, the marks of the original ceiling which crossed the space it occupies being still visible. The whole three rooms then had clearly been originally one, measuring some forty-five feet in length, twelve in height, and about twenty in breadth; lighted by its three handsome windows. Thus, doubtless, it was when "newly repaired" by "Master J. Preston,"* in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth—the pe-

* Speght's notice.

riod to which the more modern features of the room—the fireplace and panels—may be ascribed. Here, then, is a place worthy of the tradition; which, too, we may add, is in no slight degree confirmed by the circumstances narrated.

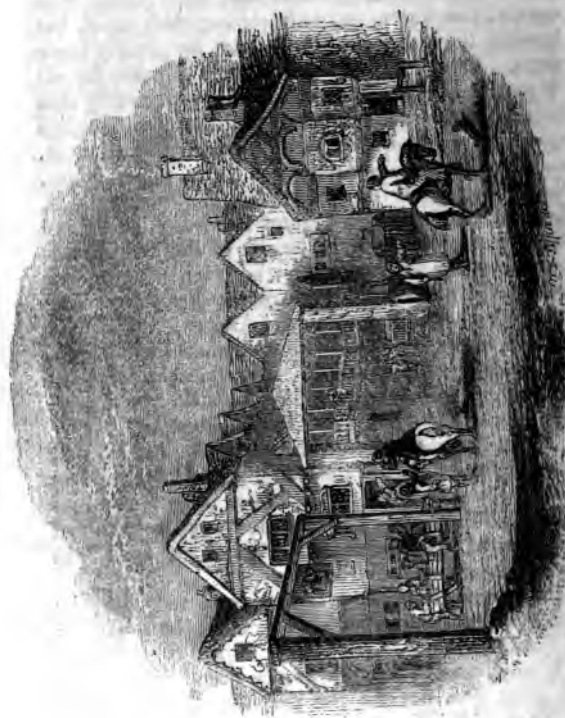
But *was* this the pilgrims' room after all? Does that or any portion of the old Tabard still exist? For the answer to these questions our readers must accompany us a brief way into the history of the inn.

Speght, in the Glossary to his edition of Chaucer, after giving a similar account with Stow of the meaning of the word Tabard, goes on to speak of the "Inn in Southwark by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester. This was the hostelry where Chaucer and the other pilgrims met together, and, with Henry Bailly their host, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury. And whereas through time it hath been much decayed, it is now by Master J. Preston, with the Abbot's house thereto adjoined, newly repaired, and with convenient rooms much increased for the receipt of many guests." The Abbey of Hyde, to which then it appears the Tabard belonged, had no less distinguished a founder than Alfred the Great, and became, in progress of time, a very splendid and wealthy establishment. Its inmates appear to have caught something of Alfred's chivalrous spirit, for, at the battle of Hastings, the Abbot, who was related to Harold, came into the field with twelve of his monks and a score of soldiers; and of all those brave English hearts who there struggled for the freedom of their outraged soil, none appear to have done better service than these gallant monks. They fell, every man,

in the field; indeed their heroism appears to have been so conspicuous as to attract the Conqueror's attention, for he afterwards used their house with special harshness, not only seizing their land, but keeping the abbey without a head for nearly three years. Henry II., however, made amends for all its past losses: he endowed it so magnificently that it became one of the most distinguished of English monasteries; and when parliaments began to meet, and the abbots to be summoned to the upper house, the Abbot of Hyde was among the number. A London residence now became necessary, and there is every probability that the site of the Tabard was purchased for this purpose—the High Street being a favoured place with those reverend prelates. The year after the conveyance, (August, 1307,) the abbot obtained a licence for "A chapel at his hospitium at St. Margaret's." Finally, at the dissolution of religious houses, the Abbot's house here was granted to John and Thomas Masters.

From Speght's notice then we see clearly, that the original Tabard was standing in 1602, unless we are to suppose that it had been pulled down, rebuilt, and then again become the "most ancient" of the inns of Southwark, and "much decayed," in the space of two hundred years.

The most important event connected with the changes the Tabard has undergone is the great fire of Southwark in 1676, which, almost forgotten as it is now, would have assuredly been spoken of as a great fire, but for the preceding conflagration of 1666. This fire broke out about four o'clock in the morning of the 26th of May, and "continued with much violence all that day and part of the night following, notwithstanding all the care of the



Woodcut illustration of Chaucer, 1720.

Duke of Monmouth, the Earl of Craven, and the Lord Mayor, to quench the same by blowing up houses and otherwise. His Majesty, accompanied with her Royal Highness, in a tender sense of this sad calamity, being pleased himself to go down to the bridge-foot in his barge, to give such orders as His Majesty found fit for putting a stop to it, which, through the mercy of God, was finally effected, after that about six hundred houses had been burnt and blown up.* The fire was stayed at St. Thomas's Hospital, and, there is reason to believe, through the instrumentality of the first fire-engine with leathern pipes ever used in this country.

The Town-hall, immediately opposite the Tabard, we know to have been then burnt down; and, *to a certain extent*, the latter must have shared the same fate. "This house," says Aubrey, "*remaining before the fire* in 1676, was an old timber house, probably coeval with Chaucer's time." He must have referred to the exterior building standing on one side of the gateway, as shown in the engraving, and which, there is no doubt, *was* coeval with Chaucer's time. But the gallery within—did that perish too in the flames? We think we may answer, certainly not; for, if it had, no such building as that which now exists would have been erected in its room. Galleries like this belong not to the time of Charles II. The very aspect of the present gallery is enough to convince any one that it was not been erected within the last one hundred and sixty years, and, if not, the facts of its previous history, as we have narrated them, will show that it

* *London Gazette*, May 29, 1676.

must be at least as old as Chaucer. We abide, therefore, firmly by the belief, that the very gallery exists along which Chaucer and the pilgrims walked; we place implicit credence in the tradition as to the "Pilgrims' Room." Let it not be said that we have devoted too much space to these proofs,—that the inquiry itself is useless; unless the reverence for distinguished men, in which such inquiries have their root, be condemned at the same time. From the period of the contention of the seven cities for the honours of the birth-place of "the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle," down to the present day, men in all ages and countries have carefully treasured up every known or supposed fact connected with the personal history of those among them who have raised humanity itself to a higher level by their exertions; and when they cease to do so, it will be not hazarding too much to say that our great poets, patriots, and philosophers may as well at once disappear from the world, for they are nothing if not honoured; they must be revered in order to be understood. If, then, our admiration of a great work interests us so much in its author, and in all the localities where he has been, and where consequently we love to linger, how much more strongly should such feelings be excited where the work itself has its own particular birthplace and locality—a home as it were from which it cannot be severed! Thus it is with the 'Canterbury Tales' and with the Tabard—the inn where the *dramatis personæ* of that "Comedy not intended for the stage" meet, in the hall of which its plan is developed, and from which the pilgrims depart, carrying with them an influence that min-

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begin to move to and fro, some preparing the tables, evidently for the entertainment of a numerous party, others strewing the floor "with herbes sote," whilst one considerably closes the window to keep out the chilling evening air, and, stirring the fire, throws on more logs. Hark! some of the pilgrims are coming; the miller giving an extra flourish of his bagpipe as he stops opposite the gateway, that they may be received with due attention. Yes, there they are now slowly coming down the yard—that extraordinary assemblage of individuals from almost every rank of society, as diversified in character as in circumstance, most richly picturesque in costume: an assemblage which only the genius of a Chaucer could have brought so intimately together, and for such admirable purposes. Yes, there is the Knight on his "good" but not "gay" horse, the fair but confident Wife of Bath, the Squire challenging attention by his graceful management of the fiery curvetting steed, the Monk with the golden bells hanging from his horse's trappings, keeping up an incessant jingle. But who is this in a remote corner of the gallery, leaning upon the balustrade, the most unobserved but most observing of all the numerous individuals scattered about the scene before us? His form is of a goodly bulk, and habited in a very dark violet-coloured dress, with bonnet of the same colour: from a button on his breast hangs the gilt anelace, a kind of knife or dagger. His face is of that kind which, once seen, is remembered for ever. Thought, "sad but sweet," is most impressively stamped upon his pale but *comely features*, to which the beard lends a fine *antique cast*. But it is the eye which most arrests

you; there is something in that which, whilst you look upon it, seems to open as it were glimpses of an unfathomable world beyond. It is the great poet-pilgrim himself; the narrator of the proceedings of the Canterbury pilgrimage. The host, having now cordially welcomed the pilgrims, is coming along the gallery to see if the hall be ready for their entertainment, making the solitary man smile as he passes at one of his merry "japes." As he enters the hall, who could fail to recognise the truth of the description?—

"A seemly man our hoste was withal
For to have been a marshal in a hall.
A large man he was, with eyen steep,
A fairer burgess is there none in Cheap:
Bold of his speech, and wise and well ytaught;
And of manhood him lacked righte nought.
Eke thereto was he right a merry man."

The dismounted pilgrims, singly or in knots, begin to ascend the gallery. Foremost comes the Knight, with a sedate and dignified countenance, telling, like his soiled gipon, of long years of service; his legs are in armour, with gilt spurs; a red-sheathed dagger hangs from his waist, and little aiglets, tipped with gold, from his shoulders. A nobler specimen of chivalry in all its gentleness and power it would be impossible to find than this "worthy man;" as distinguished for his "truth and honour" as for his "freedom and courtesy;" who has been concerned in military expeditions in almost every part of the world,—has fought in no less than "fifteen mortal battles," and made himself particularly conspicuous against the "heathen;" yet who still remains in his port and

bearing as "meek as is a maid;" who is, in short,

"A very perfect gentle knight."

With the Knight comes the Prioress, smiling, so "simple and coy," at his gallant attentions, and looking down every now and then to the tender motto of the gold brooch attached to her beads—*Amor vincit omnia*. She wears a wimple, or neck-covering, "full seemely ypinched," a handsome black cloak, and white tunic beneath—the dress of the Benedictine order, to which she belongs. Her nose is "tretis," that is to say, long and well proportioned; her eyes are grey; her mouth full small, soft, and red; and her fair forehead "a span broad." How graceful is her evident distaste for her rank, because of the stateliness of manner it entails; how plaintive and musical the tones of her voice, as she gives some new evidence of that tenderness of heart which would make her

"Weep, if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled!"

With an attention no less marked than the Knight's, and scarcely less graceful, the host receives his distinguished lady-guest at the door, and, addressing her as "courteously as it had been a maid," leads the way to the table. In the Prioress' train follow a nun and three priests; and next to them the Wife of Bath and the Squire, she laughing loudly and heartily, and he blushing at some remark the merry dame has made concerning his *absent lady-love*. Strange contrast! the one steeped *to the very lips* in romance, seeing everything by

ple light of love," sensitive as the famous elf to every touch that threatens to appease the sanctuary of his heart—the corner where ministrations of love are for ever going on, whether no longer young, but still beautiful, sweetly sensual and worldly, as utterly different from the poetry of beauty as a handsome man well be. We make that qualification, difficult to look unmoved on her winning smile, so "fair and red of hue," and which is set off by her black hat—

As broad as is a buckler or a targe."

His luxuriant-looking form is attired in a bright red surcoat or jacket, and in a blue or "fote mantel," bound round "her waist," by a golden girdle. Well, al-

lands at the church-door *has* she had five,"?

be pretty sure that it will not be long when the sixth is added to the number. Of all the men of her companion, the Squire, is perhaps the most poetical, and appears in the most poetical manner with his curled locks adorning his youthful, and manly face; his embroidered surcoat—

"As it were a mead,
full of freshe flow'ers, white and red;"

His graceful and active form revealing in every movement, that he possesses all the vigour with the freshness of the "month of May;" that he is a "bachelor" as well as a "lover," who can honourably partake all the dangers of

his father's foreign expeditions, and the next be content to be doing nothing but "singing" or "floyting*" all the day." The Knight and the Squire have with them but a single attendant, a yeoman, "clad in coat and hood of green," wearing a sword and buckler on one side, and a "gay" dagger on the other, and having a mighty bow in his hand. His "peacock arrows bright and keen" are under his belt, and his horn is slung by the green baudrick across his shoulders.

"A forester soothly is he as I guess."

It has been remarked that we often hate those whose opinions differ but to a moderate extent from our own, much more than we do those with whom we have not one opinion in common; thinking, perhaps, that we are in more danger of being mixed up in the eyes of the world with the first than with the last. Some such feeling appears to actuate two, at least, of the three reverend men who are now entering the hall, namely, the respectable Monk and the half-vagabond Friar, who, whilst looking somewhat suspiciously on each other, seem to agree in their aversion to the Parson before them. He, however, with his meek, placid countenance, and crossed hands, walks quietly up to the table, quite unconscious of the sentiments he has excited: his habit, a scarlet surcoat and hood, with a girdle of beads round his waist, proclaims the ministering priest. And where, in the history or literature of any age or nation, may we look for so perfectly sublime a character in such a simple, homely shape as this now before us? A man

* Playing on the flute.

umstances, but rich in "holy thought who, even in his poverty, will rather his poor parishioners about, than ke his brethren, "for his tithes,"—ot,

"for no rain, nor thunder,
ckness and in mischief* to visit
farthest in his parish ;"

ugh fully qualified by his learning and
ill the highest offices of the Church,
'full patient" in his adversity, teach-
's lore" to all, but letting all at the
e that he first follows it himself. No
an of this character finds little sym-
rich Monk, who can see no reason
ld be always poring over a book in a
n he might be "pricking and hunting
" and whose appearance bespeaks the
stes and appetites of its owner—"a
t and in good point." He wears a
the large sleeves worked or purfled at
h the finest fur ; his hood, now thrown
ealing his bald head, shining "as any
tened under his chin by a curious pin
a love-knot in the greater end.

ow certainly he is a fair prelate."

"a wanton and merry," with his tip-
all of knives and pins (presents for the
ith whom he is so great a favourite),

—
"For his wantonness,
his English sweet upon his tongue"—

* Misfortune.

looks still less inclined to mortify his appetites, or to want any of the good things of life for any other reason than the difficulty of obtaining them;—a small difficulty with him, whilst there are riotous “franklins,” or “worthy women,” to be absolved of their sins—whilst he maintains his reputation as the best beggar in his house;—or, lastly, whilst his “harping” and his “songs” make him a welcome guest at the “taverns” where our Friar appears in all his glory, with his eyes twinkling—

“As do the starres in a frosty night.”

But the supper-bell rings, and the remainder of the pilgrims rapidly obey the signal; a glimpse of each in passing is all that the time will admit of. Foremost comes the Sumpnour, one of that “rabble” which Milton denounces—a summoner of offenders to the ecclesiastical courts, with his “fire-red cherubines face,” and the “knobbes sitting on his cheeks,”

(“Of his viságe—children were sore afeard,”)

the very incarnation of gross, depraved self-indulgence. The immense garland on his head, however, shows he has no mean opinion of his personal attractions. Every remark he makes is plentifully interlarded with the Latin law-terms he has picked up in his attendance on the courts; but beware how you ask him their meaning: already he “hath spent all his philosophy.” With him comes his “friend and compeer,” the Pardoner, his lanky yellow hair falling about his shoulders, and bearing *before him his precious wallet*—

“*Bret full of pardon come from Rome all hot,*”

containing also his invaluable relics—the veil “Our Lady,” and a piece of the sail of St. Peter’s boat. The Miller, who is immediately before him, seems to listen with marked disrelish to the small goat’s voice, and to look with something like disgust upon his beardless face: he evidently would half like to throw him over the gal-

Certainly no man can be more unlike the rest of the Miller’s contempt and aversion than the Miller himself, so big of brawn and bone, with the stiff spade-like beard and manly countenance,

the beauty of which, it must at the same time be confessed, the nose, with its large wart and tuft of bristling hairs, somewhat detracts. His favorite bagpipes are under his arm; he is habited in a “white coat” and “blue hood.” The “slen-derholeric” Reeve, or Steward, comes next, having the hair shaved off around his ears, and a long rusty sword by his side, seeming to intimate that he finds time too, as well as his sharp wits (on which “no sword” can win), sometimes in requisition to enable him so well to keep his “garner.” The wea-

ther, the seed, the crops, form the subjects of his conversation with the Merchant at his side, who is dressed in a “motley” garment of red, lined with blue, and figured with white and blue flowers; he wears a Flanders beaver hat upon his head, and boots, and “fair” and handsome clasps, upon his feet.

A man of business is inscribed on his face. Pausing for a moment beside the door, that he may enter with becoming dignity, appears the opulent and ancient Sergeant of the Law, wearing the characteristic feature of his order, the coif, and the no less characteristic feature of the individual, the “homely grey coat.” He not only is a man full rich of

excellence, but takes care to be thought so by his wise speech; and, whilst the busiest man in his profession, seems ever to be still busier than he is. Such is the man of law—the Judge “full often at assize.” Another professional man!—the Doctor of Physic, in his low hood and bright purple surcoat and stockings; none like him to speak of physic and of surgery, and of the general business of the healing art; for he is “grounded in astronomy,” and keeps

“His patient a full great deal
In houres by his magic natural.”

It is not, however, to be overlooked, that he knows “the cause of every malady”—a knowledge that incredulous, unimaginative people may think of more importance to his fame, as a “very perfect practiser,” than the being “grounded in astronomy.”

Let us commend to all lovers of good living the pilgrim who is next coming along the gallery, this handsome-looking stately gentleman, with the snow-white beard and sanguine complexion, and the white silk gipciere, or purse, hanging from his waist. It is the Franklin, some time knight of the shire, “Epicurus’ owen son;” who is evidently snuffing up with eager pleasure certain delicate scents floating hitherwards from the kitchen, and offering up prayers that no unlucky accident may mar the delights of the table, that the sauce may not want in sharpness and poignancy, or his favourite dish be done a turn too much. He is certainly an epicure, but he is also what epicures sometimes are not, exceedingly hospitable: you shall *never enter his house without finding great store*

of baked meats, fish and flesh, or without experiencing the truth of the popular remark—

“It snowèd in his house of meat and drink.”

Lastly, come crowding in together the Manciple, so “wise in buying of victual” for the temple to which he belongs, dressed in a light-blue surcoat, and little light-brown cap; the Shipman, whose hue “the hot summer” has made “all brown,” whose beard has been shaken in “many a tempest,” and who seems to be still treading his favourite deck; the Cook, famous for his “blanc-manger,” who has been preparing for the culinary exertions of the morrow by a little extra refreshment this evening; the Ploughman—the Parson’s brother, a man possessing much of the Parson’s spirit; and the Haberdasher, the Carpenter, the Weaver, the Dyer, and the Maker of tapestry, with their silver-wrought knives, showing they are each of them well to do in the world, and in every respect

“Shapèlich for to be an alderman.”

Two only of the pilgrims are now missing from the board, the Clerk of Oxenford and the Poet: and here they come; the poor Clerk, in his “threadbare” garment, and with his “hollow” face lighted up by an air of inexpressible animation at some remark that has dropped from the lips of his inspired companion. And could Chaucer look unmoved at such a character as the Clerk?—a character so much like his own in all respects but rank and worldly circumstance, that we are not sure but he has here pointed out those mental characteristics which he did not choose to includ

in his own nominal portrait ; which, be it observed too, is merely personal. The Clerk has his own love of books, and study

“ Of Aristotle and his philosophy ;”

whilst of Chaucer, perhaps, might be more justly said than of the Clerk,

“ Not a word spake he more than was need,
And that was said in form, and reverence,
And short, and quick, and full of high sentence.
Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.”

Supper is now brought in ; fish, flesh, and fowl, baked meats, roast meats, and boiled, high-seasoned dishes, burning as it were with wild-fire, and others gaily painted and turreted with paper. Among the liquors handed round, due honour is done to the famous ale, of which the proverb says—

“ The nappy strong ale of Southwark
Keeps many a gossip frae the kirk.”

“ Strong ” wines, also, are there, either “ neat as imported,” according to the old tavern inscriptions, such as those of Rochelle, Bourdeaux, Anjou, Gascoyne, Oseye, &c., or compounded under the names of Hippocras, pigment, and claret. Both ale and wine are carried by the attendants in goblets of wood and pewter. Pilgrims have generally sharp appetites, and Chaucer’s are by no means an exception ; they have commenced in good earnest the business of the table.

Scarcely is the supper over, and the “ reckonings ” made, before our host, who has evidently for some

time been impatient to tell the guests of the merry fancy that possesses him, bursts out with—

“ Now lordings truely
 Ye be to me welcôme right heartily ;
 For by my truth, if that I shall not lie,
 I saw not this year such a company
 At once in this herberwe* as is now,
 Fain would I do you mirth, and I wist how.
 And of a mirth I am right now bethought,
 To do you ease, and it shall cost you nought.
 Ye go to Canterbury ; God you speed,
 The blissful martyr quitet† you your meed
 And well I wot as ye go by the way
 Ye shapen you to talken and to play :
 For truely comfort, ne mirth, is none
 To riden by the way dumb as the stone.
 And therefore would I maken you disport,
 As I said erst, and do you some comfort.
 And if you liketh all by one assent
 Now for to standen at my judgèment,
 And for to worken as I shall you say
 To-morrow, when ye riden on the way,—
 Now by my father's soulè that is dead,
 But ye be merry, smiteth off my head.
 Hold up your hands withouten morè speech.”

The answer of the pilgrims may be easily guessed ; the frank hearty good-nature—the gay jovial spirit of the appeal was cordially responded to ; in a spirit of the truest wisdom, Chaucer says—

“ Us thought it was not worth to make it wise,”
 so they “ bad him say his verdict as him lest :”—

* From *arbour* apparently, a word often applied anciently to *inns, lodgings, &c.*

† *Requite.*

‡ *Lest,—liked, pleased.*

“ Lordings, quod he, now hearkeneth for the best ;
But take it not, I pray you, in disdain :
This is the point, to speak it plat and plain,
That each of you, to shorten with your way,
In this viage* shall tellen tales tway ;
To Canterbury ward, I mean it so,
And homeward he shall tellen other two,
Of adventures that whilom have befall.
And which of you that beareth him best of all,
That is to say, that telleth in this case
Tales of best sentence and most solace,
Shall have a supper at your aller cost,
Here in this place, sitting by this post,
When that ye come again from Canterbury.”

We cannot but here observe, by the way, how this last line but one carries the eye and the thought back to the domestic architecture of the middle ages, when the large rooms or halls of inns, and of gentlemen's mansions of a secondary and inferior class, were supported sometimes by a pillar or “ post ” in the centre, sometimes by one near each end of the room. Near the post appears to have been the head of the table, the place of honour ; for the Host says the victor in the proposed intellectual games shall sit “ here in this place, sitting by the post ; ” and it is a characteristic evidence of the dignity and social rank of “ hosts ” in those days to find Harry Bailly, our host, even in the presence of a knight of distinguished reputation, who forms one of the party, taking that seat as a matter of course. The proposal is now told, but the Host naturally wishes himself to enjoy the mirth it provides, and therefore adds—

“ And, for to maken you the more merry,

* Viage,—journey.

I will myselfen gladly with you ride
 Right at mine owen cost, and be your guide;
 And who that will my judgèment withsay,
 Shall pay for all we spenden by the way."

Both propositions are accepted by the pilgrims with "full glad heart," and they "prayden him also"

"— that he woulde be our governor,
 And of our Tales judge and réporter,
 And set a supper at a certain price;
 And we would ruled be at his device
 In high and low."

In the morning the pilgrims ride forth, and then the Host, reminding them of their engagement, at once assumes the duties of his situation:—

"Let see now, who shall tell the firste tale:
 As ever may I drinken wine and ale,
 Who so is rebel to my judgèment
 Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.
 Now draweth cut, ere that ye farther twinne,*
 He which that hath the shortest shall begin."

The "cut" or lot falls on the Knight, not without exciting suspicion against our politic Host of a little manœuvring, to ensure a priority desirable on account of the rank of the party, and to compass also what perhaps the Host thought of more importance—a favourable commencement of his scheme. The Knight begins with that noble tale, so well known by Dryden's version, of Palamon and Arcite. Such is the plan, and such the mode of commencement, of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

With wonderful strength and consistency, the character of the Host is kept up throughout the

* Twinne,—go.



Host and Cook.

work. His undissembled delight at the close of the Knight's tale—

"Our hoste laughed and swore,
This goeth aright, unbuckled is the mail :
Let see now, who shall tell another tale ;"—

is professional considerateness, when, having named the Monk as the next spokesman, the drunken Miller interposes and insists upon first telling his tale, the Host kindly says—

"Abidè, Robin, my levè * brother,
Some better man shall tell us first another :
Abidè, and let us worken thriftily ;"

at finding him deaf to reason, bids him hastily "Tell on a devil way ;"—his dislike to the Reve's sermoning," as he characterizes the latter's moral reflections on his own past life ;—his humour when he reminds the Cook of the many a Jack of Dover (probably a species of pasty) he has sold

"That hath been twiès hot and twiès cold ;"—

is scorn of the Franklin's desire that his son should learn gentillesse—

"Straw for your gentillesse, quod our host ;"—

is indignation at injustice, and his sympathy with the poor objects, as marked by his observations on the Doctor's tale (the popular story of Virginius) ;—his ludicrous contempt for the Pardoner, who made a business of the exhibition of relics ;—and, lastly, his peculiarly tender and gallant manners towards the fair, as shown when he addresses the Prioress

"As courteously as it had been a maid ;"

* Dear.

all combine to form a picture of as true and genuine a specimen of a good old English man as it would be possible to find in the entire range of literature. Our space will only allow us to notice one or two other interesting matters connected with the Host. The first concerns a piece of his domestic history which is furnished to us, and from which we find that his lady was somewhat of a shrew. He tells us a few particulars of her at the conclusion of the Merchant's tale, in which a lady plays a not very creditable part.

"By Goddes mercy, said our hoste tho,*
 Now such a wife I pray God keep me fro.
 Lo, suche sleighthes and subtilities
 In women be ; for aye as busy as bees
 Be they us silly men for to deceive,
 And from a sothet† will they ever weive.‡

I have a wife, though that she poore be ;
 But of her tongue a labbing§ shrew is she,
 And yet she hath a heap of vices mo."

However, thinks he, it is an unpleasant subject—so

"Let all such thinges go ;"

the more too that he prudently remembers the possibility that what he was saying

"Should reported be,
 And told to her of some of this company ;"

so he desists for the present ; but when the subject is again brought home to him, by the contrast presented by the character of Prudence in the tale of Melibœus, he cannot help exclaiming

"As I am a faithful man,
 And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,

* Then.

† Truth.

‡ Depart.

§ Blabbing.

I hadde liever, than a barrel of ale
 That goode lief my wife had heard this tale ;
 For she n'is no thing of such patience."

And some very striking proofs of the charge he proceeds to give :—

" By Goddes bonès, when I beat my knaves,
 She bringeth me the greate clubbèd staves,
 And crieth, Slay the dogges every one,
 And break them bothe back and every bone.
 And if that any neighèbour of mine
 Will not in churche to my wife incline,
 Or be so hardy to her to trespáce,
 When she cometh home she rampeth in my face,
 And cryeth, Falsè coward, wreak thy wife ;
 By *corpus Domini*, I will have thy knife ;
 And thou shalt have my distaff, and go spin :
 From day till night, right thus she will begin.

Alas, she saith, that ever I was yshape
 To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
 That will be overlad with* every wight !
 Thou dar'st not standen by thy wivès right :—
 This is my life, but if I that will fight ;
 And out at door anon I must me dight
 Or elles I am lost, but if that I
 Be like a wilde lion, fool hardy," &c.

Alas ! poor Host, thine is a hopeless case. But, as he says,

" Let us pass away from this mattére."

An interesting illustration of the times in connection with religious matters arises from the Host's propensity to swearing. "Benedicite!" exclaims the Parson,

" What aileth the man, so sinfully to swear ?
 Our host answér'd, O ! Jankin, be ye there ?

* Overborne by.

Now good men, quod our host, heark'néth to me,
 I smell a Lollard in the wind, quod he,
 'This Lollard here will preachen us somewhat."

So that to abstain from ribaldry and profane oaths in the time of Wycliffe, were proofs of heresy; as they were afterwards, in the reigns of Charles I. and II., of disloyalty! The lines that follow are highly interesting as showing us the opinions of Lollardism at the very time that Wycliffe was actively propagating the "heresy." The Poet was in all probability something of a Lollard himself. Taking up the Host's prophecy that the Parson will give them a sermon—

"Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he not,
 Saide the Shipman; here shall he not preach,
 He shall no gospel glosen here, nor teach;
 We 'lieven all in the great God, quod he.
 He woulde sowen some difficulty,
 Or springen cockle in our cleane corn," &c.

We conclude our notice of the Host's character by observing that Shakspeare has exhibited his admiration of it in a marked manner. From the Host of Chaucer, "Mine Host of the Garter in the Merry Wives of Windsor is obviously derived; and that even our immortal dramatist should in his copy have been far from surpassing the original, is surely the highest of imaginable tributes to the triumphant genius of Chaucer."* We may add, too, that it is probable Shakspeare desired the original to be remembered, not only from the use of the same general denomination—Host—but from the very peculiarities of *his* Host's speech, "Said I well?" is his constant phrase; "Said I not well?" *exclaims Harry Bailly.* [Pardoner's Prologue.]

* *Retrospective Review*, vol. xiv. p. 315.

is not our purpose here to follow the pilgrims to Canterbury; so, leaving them to make the best of their way, with all the assistance that music, humour, wit, and pathos can give them, or that the delicacies of the time as prepared for them by the Cook can furnish for their corporeal enjoyment, let us at once anticipate their arrival at Canterbury, their lodgment in one of the numerous inns that still, broken up into little tenements, form such a peculiar feature in this ancient city, and their visit to the Cathedral, where one after the other the sacred relics are shown to them, and which they—kneeling—are allowed to kiss. Among these relics are the armour of the knight whose skull is cased in silver, the blade of the sword with which he was slain, and the hair shirt he wore at the time of the murder. Then, too, the great store of jewels, and vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, are shown to them (from behind the strong grating), if it be only to remind them of their origin,—the pious liberality of our pilgrims: a significant hint, and a powerful stimulus. Before our band of pilgrims leave Canterbury, there will be noticeable additions to the already ready incalculable amount of the wealth of the shrine.

Having thus made ourselves familiar with the contents of the Poem, and given such a brief glimpse of the personages as we hope may induce a desire to know more of them, we proceed to the immediate object of these pages, which is to present to the reader Chaucer the entire series of portraits as drawn by himself at full length, and with a marked junction of breadth and minuteness: a *which*, apart from their literary value, forms

by far the richest body of materials possessed by any European country for the explanation of the manners, customs, characters, and modes of life and thought of the people during the Middle Ages. And as the portraits pass in review before us, we propose in our comments to illustrate as well as to explain whatever may seem necessary or desirable, in order to a due understanding and appreciation of the individual, or the class to which he belongs.

The characters of the 'Canterbury Tales' may be divided into three broad divisions, those relating to chivalry, to religion, and generally to the domestic life of England, and in such divisions shall we treat of them.

SECTION II.

CHIVALRY.—THE KNIGHT.

ALTHOUGH we cannot trace the existence of chivalry backwards to so very remote a period as that referred to in the "Vision of Piers Ploughman,"* where we find that David "dubbed knights," yet there is much reason to doubt the truth of the common opinion which ascribes its origin to the eleventh century, and considers that it was then first invented as a great moral antagonist to the deplorable evils of the time; for "a closely attentive as well as philosophical analysis of the history of European society in the middle ages proves this theory, or rather this supposition, to be deceitful. It shows us that chivalry was not, in the eleventh century, an innovation—an institution brought about by a special exigency which it was expressly adapted to meet. It arose much more simply, more naturally, and more silently; it was but the development of material facts long before existing—the spontaneous result of the Germanic manners and the feudal relations. It took its birth in the interior of the feudal mansions, without any set purpose beyond that of declaring, first, the admission of the young man to the rank and occupation of the warrior; secondly, the tie which bound him to his feudal superior—his lord, who conferred upon

* By Robert [or William] Langlande; the most distinguished poetical work that had appeared before the productions of Gower and Chaucer.

him the arms of knighthood. . . . But when once the feudal society had acquired some degree of stability and confidence, the usages, the feelings, the circumstances of every kind, which attended the young man's admission among the vassal warriors, came under two influences, which soon gave them a fresh direction, and impressed them with a novel character. Religion and imagination, poetry and the church, laid hold on chivalry, and used it as a powerful means of attaining the objects they had in view, of meeting the moral wants which it was their business to provide for."* And the result was that character—of all characters, whether of romance or reality, the most popular for many ages—the Knight;—that strange incarnation of the most opposite qualities of our nature; whose gentleness in peace was no less remarkable than his ferocity in war; who was as pious in faith as he was not uncommonly irreligious in deed; who held such pure and lofty notions of women in the abstract, that they were to him women no longer, but a species of earthly goddesses, worthy of all reverence, and a life-long self-devotion to their service; yet who at the same time but too often exhibited in his life the grossest sensuality, the most utter disregard of their true welfare or dignity. To such discrepancies between the knight's theory and practice in the matters of religion and love, doubtless there were many exceptions; to those concerning his disposition in peace and war there could be few or none. War was their "being's end and aim." "Take them," says Godwin, "in the chamber of peace, it is impossible to figure to ourselves any-

* *Penny Cyclopædia* (from Guizot), article 'Chivalry,' vol. vii. p. 99.

thing more humane. When occasion called to them to succour the oppressed, and raise the dejected, overwhelmed by some brutal and insulting foe, they appeared like Gods descending from heaven for the consolation of mankind. But the garb of peace, however gracefully they wore it, they regarded as only an accident of their character. War was their profession, their favourite scene, the sustenance of their life. If it did not offer itself to them at home, they would seek it to the ends of the earth, and sell themselves to any master rather than not find occasion to prove the intrepidity of their temper and the force of their arm. When they entered the field of battle, they regarded the business of war not as a matter of dire and tremendous necessity, but as their selected pleasure. Their hearts were then particularly alive, and all their pulses beat with joy.* Froissart furnishes a happy illustration of this passage, in his account of the battle of Poitiers. "The prince of Wales (the Black Prince), who was as courageous and *cruel as a lion*, took great pleasure this day in fighting and chasing his enemies;" yet, when the battle was over, and the French king made prisoner, the same prince waited upon his illustrious captive at supper, with a tenderness and delicacy of respect, that it is impossible to read of unmoved. The period of Edward II. and of his gallant son is indeed the period of the most palmy state of chivalry; it is also the period of Chaucer; who, in "the Knight" and "the Squire," has shown us the two great and nearly distinguishable phases of the knightly character. In the one, we see the young, loving, en-

* Godwin's 'Life of Chaucer,' vol. ii. p. 237.

thusiastic, poetical, and accomplished aspirant for military honours; in the other, the aged veteran warrior, with whom the stern realities of life have sobered down much of its early romance.

“ *A Knight* there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the timè that he first began
To riden out, he lovèd chivalry,
Truth and honóur, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his lordes war,
And thereto had he ridden, no man far’.*
As well in Christendom as in Heatheness:
And ever honour’d for his worthiness.

At Alisandre† he was when it was won.
Full often time he had the board begun‡
Aboven alle nations in Prusse.
In Lettowc§ had he reysèd||, and in Russe,
No Christian man so oft of his degree.
In Gernade at the siege eke had he be
Of Algezir¶, and ridden in Belmarie.**
At Layas was he, and at Satalie,††
When they were won; and in the Greate Sea‡‡
At many a noble army had he be.

* Farther.

† Alexandria, taken in 1365 by Pierre de Lusignan, king of Cyprus, but immediately abandoned.

‡ He had been placed at the head of the table or board, as a compliment to his extraordinary merit.

§ Lithuania. || Journeyed in military expeditions.

¶ The city of Algezir, or Algeçiras, was taken from the Moorish king of Granada in 1344, and the earls of Derby and Salisbury assisted at the siege.

** Supposed to refer to a place or kingdom of Africa. In the Glossary to Urry’s Chaucer, the “country in Barbary, called by Vassens, Benamarin,” is presumed to be the same as Belmarie.

†† Layas, a town in Armenia, and Satalie, the ancient Attalia, were both taken by the king of Cyprus before mentioned; the former in 1367, the latter in 1352.

‡‡ Supposed to be the Mediterranean.

At mortal battles had he been fifteen,
 And foughten for our faith at Tramissene*
 In listès thriès, and aye slain his foe.

This ilkè worthy knight had been also,
 Sometimè with the lord of Palathie,†
 Against another heathen in Turkéy.
 And evermore he had a sovereign prise.‡
 And though that he was worthy, he was wise;
 And of his port as meek as is a maid.
 He never yet no villainy§ ne said
 In all his life unto no manner wight:
He was a very perfect, gentle knight.

But for to tellen you of his array;
 His horse was good, but he ne was not gay.
 Of fustian he wearèd a gipon||
 All bésmotter'd¶ with his habergeon; **
 For he was late ycome from his viàge,
 And wentè for to do his pilgrimage."

In connection with the personal appearance of the knight, we may here observe, that in a very interesting manuscript of the 'Canterbury Tales,' written in the fifteenth century, which was bought at the Duke of Bridgewater's sale at Ashridge, and is now in the possession of the Duke of Sutherland, there is, at the commencement of each tale, a pictorial representation of the relater. The figures, it is stated,†† are drawn and coloured with great care, and present a very minute delineation of the dress and costume of Chaucer's time. In the portrait of the knight, the countenance is highly expressive of sedateness and dignity. His folded

* Supposed to refer to a place or kingdom of Africa.

† Palathia in Anatolia.

‡ Praise.

§ "Anything unbecoming a gentleman."—*Tyrrwhitt.*

|| A short cassock.

¶ Soiled.

** Coat of mail.

†† Todd's 'Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer.'

head-covering is of a dark colour. His gipon is also dark, but his under coat, which is discernible through the sleeves at his wrists, red. His legs are in armour, with gilt spurs. His dagger is in a red sheath by his side; and he wears little points or aiglets of red, tipped with gold, on his neck and shoulder.

In Leland's Itinerary we find the epitaph of the —noble and valiant knight Matthew de Gournay, who, in his life, was at the battle of Benamaryn (probably the Belmarie mentioned by Chaucer, see the note to Belmarie in a preceding page), and afterwards at the siege of Algezir against the Saracens, and also at the battles of L'Escluse, of Cressy, of Deyngenesse, of Peyteres (Poitiers), of Nazare, of Ozrey, and at several other battles and sieges, in which he gained great praise and honour.—This warrior, whose adventures so strikingly illustrate those of Chaucer's knight, died in 1406, aged 96 years. It has been justly noticed, as a peculiar feature of the times, that Chaucer does *not* bring *his* hero from Cressy and Poitiers, but from Alexandria and Lithuania; as though comparatively slight services against infidels were then thought of more importance than the most brilliant victories where Christians alone were concerned. It appears that it was usual in the fourteenth century for military men to go to Prussia, in order to serve with the knights of the Teutonic order, who were in a constant state of warfare with their then heathen neighbours. The youngest son of Edward III., Thomas, duke of Gloucester, and Henry, earl of Derby (Bolingbroke), afterwards Henry IV., were among the distinguished men who shared in these expeditions.



The Knight, and the Squire.

“If,” says Speght, “any desire to know the profession of those knights called Teutonic, it was thus:—They having their dwelling at Jerusalem, were bound to entertain pilgrims, and at occasion to serve in war against the Saracens. They were apparelled in white, and upon their uppermost garments did wear a thick cross. And for that this order was first begun by a rich Almaine, none were received into the same, save only gentlemen of the Dutch nation. After Jerusalem was last taken by the Saracens, anno 1184, these knights retired to Ptolemaida; and that being taken, into Germany, their own country; and whereas there also the people of Prussia used incursions upon their confines, they went unto Frederick II. their emperor, anno 1220, who granted them leave to make wars upon them, and to turn the spoil to the maintenance of their order. After their conquest of Prussia, these knights grew rich, and built there many temples, and places of residence for bishops, who also were enjoined to wear the habit of the order. Chaucer will have his knight of such fame that he was both known and honoured of this order.”

In war, as well as in peace, the fantastic as well as the more noble traits of chivalry were constantly being developed. The knight fought well, no doubt, for his God or his sovereign, but it was his mistress that he thought of while fighting; and however he enhanced his renown by his feats of arms, what he most valued was the fresh lustre that he thereby added to his mistress' name. One of the strangest evidences of the existence of such feelings, is mentioned by Froissart, as *having* occurred during Edward III.'s *expeditions against France*; when he says, the knights

who formed the army, wore a patch on the eye, having made a vow that it should not be removed until they had performed exploits worthy of their liege ladies. The liberality of the knights at times assumed an equally absurd aspect. When Alexander III. of Scotland repaired to London, attended by a hundred knights, at the time of the coronation of Edward I., the whole party, as soon as they had alighted, let loose their steeds, all most richly caparisoned, to be scrambled for by the multitude. This was probably new to the English chivalry, and no doubt startled them not a little; five, however, of the English nobles immediately followed the example set them. Lastly, the religion itself of chivalry, though a deep and genuine sentiment, had nothing to do with the intellect,—was of heaven for the elevation of earth,—but exercised little influence over the every-day business of life; thus a knight's devotion was wont at times to assume a ludicrously indecorous form, even when his heart was most full of pious emotion. Here is an instance in point, from the delightful French historian of chivalry, M. de St. Palaye: Stephen Vignolles, surnamed Lahire, was proceeding in company with the Count de Dunois, to raise the siege of Montargis, in 1427. Drawing near the camp of the English, Lahire fell in with a chaplain, of whom he requested immediate absolution. The priest bade him confess his sins. Lahire replied that there was no time for confession, but that he had been guilty of all the usual sins of a soldier. Upon this the chaplain granted him absolution; and Lahire, clasping his hands together, made the following prayer in his Gascon jargon: "God, I beg of thee, that thou wouldest

this day do as much for Lahire, as thou wouldest Lahire should do for thee, if he were God, and thou wert Lahire."

We have spoken of the knight's romance being sobered down, but it is only sobered down, not evaporated. With old and young the universal motto of the knighthood of Europe during his time was, "Tout l'amour, tout à l'honor;" and our knight is far from being a recreant to the sentiments which gave to chivalry all its grace and glory. When, therefore, he is chosen to tell the first tale, he seems at once to have grown young again. Never certainly was a story more admirably adapted to knightly theme—more sounding with chivalrous feats of arms, and no less chivalrous devotion to the fair, than that he tells—the well-known 'Palamon and Arcite.'

But now let us turn from the knight as an example of the illustrious supporters of chivalry, in order to look at him in connection with the warlike system of England to which he belonged, and which, though Chaucer has been silent upon the point, must have imposed upon him a share in all the great national expeditions of his day. Our military strength depended entirely on the number and the heroic temper of the soldiers whom the sovereign was able to call into the field. The *number* was secured by the *service de chevalier*, *per servitium militare*, or tenure by knights' service, introduced at the Norman Conquest, and swept away, among so many other relics of the past, in the civil wars of the seventeenth century. The mode of its operation was this. A soldier *had land lent* him sufficient for his maintenance; *it might be some six or eight hundred acres, accord-*

ing to the productiveness of the soil, and the value of the situation, or other circumstances; the income produced might be 15*l.* or 20*l.* per annum, old money, until toward the time of Edward II., when the value was not to sink below 40*l.* It was his hope, doubtless, to add to his income by spoils taken in battle; or to raise himself to the rank of a feudal lord, by sharing in the conquest of foreign lands. Any way, his valour was his dependence; for if he were neither by nature a hero, nor ambitious, he was nevertheless bound by his tenure to be ready at all times to follow to the wars the lord who lent him his lands, and to remain with him in military service forty days in every year; a period subsequently increased to sixty, except when the agreement of infeudation named a shorter period. If unable to attend in person, he found a substitute. The clergy, women, and old men, were also compelled to find substitutes.

Here we see the idea of knighthood in its simplest form, because reduced to its original elements—land sufficient for the soldier's maintenance, and military service for its use. It is important to observe that the land in all these cases was, as we have said, lent, not given at first, and probably resumable at the pleasure of the grantor. But as the feudal system became consolidated, both parties began to look more and more at the arrangement we have described, as one that it was not desirable to disturb; and so it grew into a custom, and thence into a right, of the vassal or tenant to consider the land he enjoyed as his own, while he rendered the services originally agreed upon. The transition was easy after that to the eldest son assuming the *same position* when the father died, and ultimately

to the descent of the land in the collateral as well as in the direct line of succession, females even not being excluded.

The general idea of knighthood above given, varied in infinite ways. The crown, wishing to secure or reward some bold adherent, bestows on him great estates; these, let their extent or number be what they may, consist of so many knights' fees, for each of which he is bound to furnish a knight for the king's service. Through the Conquest, England became the entire possession of the sovereign, and was parcelled out in this way into about 60,000 knights' fees.

But we often see in the middle ages that the power thus given for the support of the crown proved its bane, especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The chief, able to command the military services of so many knights, was sometimes tempted to lead them to war, in order to curb or dethrone his sovereign. We read of *armies* of retainers; and the word is no poetical licence, for soldiers of humbler standing, holding half a knight's fee, and rendering half the term of service required of a knight, that is, twenty days, or a quarter of a knight's fee, and rendering but ten days' service, often swelled the ranks of a knight-in-chief. Other claims on his vassals grew out of the main one. In his warlike life, nothing more possible than his being one day taken prisoner—his vassal knights must make *aids* for ransoming him; his eldest son, in course of time, must be admitted into the order of knighthood—here, again, their aids are required; his eldest daughter is to be wedded—their aids must *contribute* to portion her. Mr. Hallam considers the *aids* to have formed the commencement of modern

taxation. Then the heirs of the lord's vassals cannot succeed to their fathers' lands without making him a *relief*, that is, a payment in the nature of a composition; and if they be under age, both they and their lands are in his power. He may marry them to whomsoever he pleases, unless they can make good a refusal on account of disparity of rank, crime, or bodily infirmity; as to personal liking, no weight is allowed to such a trifling consideration; if it happen to run counter to the lord's views, why he makes no scruple to solace himself with their inheritance, or as much of it as the proposed match would have been worth to him. In any case, he enjoys all the profits of their lands until their majority; and if he happen to be in want of money, he sells the wardship outright to a stranger. There is a power in all this, often felt as grievous; but the lord has to submit to the same in respect to the sovereign. His own heir, though of full age, cannot succeed to his estates without making the king a present of a whole year's revenue. There were other services of the vassal, which show strikingly the intimate and honourable character of the connection between him and his lord. "It was," says Mr. Hallam, "a breach of faith to divulge the lord's counsel, to conceal from him the machinations of others, to injure his person or fortune, or to violate the sanctity of his roof, and the honour of his family. In battle he was bound to lend his horse to his lord when dismounted, to adhere to his side while fighting, and to go into captivity as a hostage for him when taken. His attendance was due at the lord's courts, sometimes to witness and sometimes to bear a part in the administration of justice."

So important a matter as the granting of a fief, would naturally be attended by ceremonies accordant with the customs of the middle ages. These ceremonies were highly solemn, expressive, and picturesque, and were of three kinds—homage, fealty, and investiture. It is a curious characteristic of the many lofty sentiments infused in, and giving strength to the feudal system, that the most honourable of these ceremonies, that of homage, was the most humble on the part of the vassal; but then it was evidently received in a generous and affectionate spirit. The frank tenant (as the freeholder was called), with ungirded belt, uncovered head, and with his sword and spurs laid aside, knelt on both knees before his lord, who sat, and placing his hands jointly together between his lord's hands, he spoke thus: "I become your man from this day forward, of life, and limb, and of earthly worship, and unto you shall be true and faithful, and bear you faith for the tenements that I claim to hold of you, saving the faith that I owe to our sovereign lord the king;" and having said this, he kissed the lord's cheek, and the lord kissed his mouth. Peers, in the present day, it will be remembered, kiss the cheek of the Sovereign during the coronation ceremony, a custom evidently originating in that just described. No oath was here taken; but in substituting the ceremony of fealty for that of homage, when ecclesiastics, or persons of humbler military and social rank, were concerned, the oath only, similar in its terms to the declaration above stated, was taken without kneeling, and not unfrequently by proxy.

Investiture was the formal giving into the tenant's hands the lands granted, and which was

done, as far as was possible, literally by the lord or his deputy, or symbolically by the delivery (often in a church) of a turf, a stone, or some other of the *ninety-eight* prevalent modes enumerated by Du Cange.

Thus was the feudal system built up ; thus did it rise into power and prosperity. How it declined and fell may be shown in fewer words. As the vassal found his actual power increase, by the acknowledgment of his rights, and the general development of the resources of the country, it was inevitable that he should use it for his own purposes, and that as he did so, the lord's power should decline. The sense of gratitude passed away with the sense of dependence. Trade and commerce became to many more agreeable than war, and were greatly promoted at the expense of the latter, by the practice that gradually obtained of military service being commuted for money payment. A town residence was found safer and more pleasant in many respects than a country one ; and lastly, the sovereign himself (by the reign of Henry II.) began to prefer an army of mercenaries who would at all times study his pleasure, if he only studied their pay and opportunities of plunder, to an army of vassals who took the liberty of thinking how every military movement concerned their interests as well as his—who were too often, to his view, reasoning and advising in the council, when they should have been obeying and fighting in the field.

THE SQUIRE. ¹

As in the description of the Knight we have seen a full and complete development of that character which it was the object of the chivalric institutions to create, so in the Squire we perceive the preliminary stage of the process; the foundation, as it were, upon which the knightly character has been built. Thus whilst our knight fondly, but not unreasonably anticipates, that what he is, his son (the Squire) shall one day be; he cannot but at the same time remember that that son, with all his youthful grace and enthusiasm, his mental and bodily accomplishments, is but an epitome of his former self. And how exquisitely has Chaucer painted this young aspirant for military glories! The description, like the individual it celebrates, is "as fresh as is the month of May;" like the airs of that sweet season, it seems filled with the sense of new life—of growing vigorous beauty. With the Knight

"There was his son, a young Squiér,
 A lover and a lusty bachelor,
 With lockès curl'd as they were laid in press;
 Of twenty year of age he was, I guess.
 Of his stature he was of even length,
 And wonderly deliver*, and great of strength.
 And he had been some time in chevachie†
 In Flanders, in Artois, and in Picardy;
 And borne him well, as of so little space,
 In hope to standen in his lady's grace.
 Embroidered was he, as it were a mead,
 All full of freshe flow'res, white and red.

* *Active, nimble.*

† A military expedition.

Singing he was, or floyting* all the day :
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gown, with sleevès long and wide.
 Well could he sit on horse, and fairè ride.
 He couldè songès make, and well indite,
 Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray, and write.
 So hot he lovèd, that by nightertale†
 He slept no more than doth the nightingale.
 Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,
 And carv'd before his father at the table."

The tale which was told by the Squire to the pilgrims, is described by Milton as

" The story of Cambuscan bold,
 Of Camball and of Algarsife,
 And who had Canace to wife,
 That own'd the virtuous ring and glass ;
 And of the wond'rous horse of brass
 On which the Tartar king did ride."

It is a tale of the very first order of imaginative romance, but, unhappily, left imperfect.

To Chaucer's description, we may add a few words illustrative of the miniature portrait of the Squire in the manuscript before mentioned. His locks are there curiously curled, and give the idea of their having been "laid in press;" whilst his short vest, with his cloak fluttering in the wind, is embroidered so as to give something of the appearance of the "mead all full of freshe flow'res, white and red;" the ground being of a green colour, lined with red, on which are small white spots or ornaments. His pantaloons are white, the upper part adorned with ermine. He wears a light but high

* *Playing on the flute.*

† *Night-time.*

blue cap, embroidered in the front. His horse is on the gallop, and evidently under graceful as well as skilful management. Such was the Squire of the reign of Edward III. at the age of twenty years, or within a few months of the period when he would be admitted into the knightly order. Let us now see what was the nature and what were the details of that education which produced such results.

Up to his seventh year, the boy destined for the honours of the military profession, spent his time among the females of the family; he then entered upon the first stage of his career. He received the appellation of page, or valet, and was admitted to the society of his father, and of his father's friends and visitors. If his family were sufficiently affluent, companions of his own age, and with similar views, but of more straitened circumstances, were educated with him in the same house, who became his earliest friends and associates, and who often remained through life his devoted brethren in war. But if, on the contrary, his own family were comparatively poor, he then himself entered the house of some other nobleman or gentleman to receive the requisite training. Among the very earliest lessons instilled into his mind was that of unbounded admiration for the knightly character, as it was continually pointed out to him, in the persons of the most worthy and accomplished warriors of the time. Upon them therefore he looked with awe, wonder, and earnest love; they were the standards of excellence he set up in his own mind, by which he would constantly measure himself. The physical exercises calculated to *strengthen his youthful frame* were now begun. As *he approached nearer to the period of the honours*

and duties of the Squire, "the love of God and the ladies," in the irreverent but characteristic language of the time, was constantly cherished in him: he was taught, on the one hand, that no true rotary of knighthood ever undertook any important adventure, or entered into any serious engagement, without previous prayer and devotional exercise; and on the other, that the knight who thought or spoke of the female sex with familiarity or disrespect, was a recreant to his order, a most ignoble member of a most noble profession. Carrying out this principle, he was to consider it one of the highest privileges of his calling to be able to relieve their distress or avenge their wrong; and lastly, he was to look upon their opinion as the great tribunal where all his actions were to be judged—where he was to be disgraced by censure, or honoured by applause. Godwin remarks that "it is the remnant of this sentiment which has given to the intercourse of the sexes, from the days of chivalry to the present time, a refinement and a spirit of sanctity and honour wholly unknown to the ancient world."* It was, then, only a fitting provision in the education of the page, that he should select at this early period of youth, from among the virgins whose society he frequented, one, to whose service he was to devote himself, towards whom he might show the practical effects of the lessons so carefully inculcated. Thus passed his life until the fourteenth year. He was now raised to the dignity of Squire; and with ceremonies that impressed still more deeply upon the mind of the excited youth a consciousness of the importance of

* *Life of Chaucer*, vol. i. p. 411.

the occasion. His father and mother, or two of his near relations, each holding a lighted taper, led him to the altar, upon which a sword and girdle had been previously laid. These the ministering priest took up, and having pronounced a benediction over them, girt the youth with his first warlike insignia.

During the next or final period, that of probation for the highest office, the Squire spent a great part of each day in the open air, in exercises which conduced alike to the vigour of his body, the suppleness of his limbs, and the precision both of his eye and arm. He dressed and trained his own horses; he practised leaping, running, and mounting on horseback clad in all his armour; he scaled walls with the assistance merely of his hands and feet; above all, he paid the greatest attention to those sports which, as it were, prefigured the exploits of that grand arena, the tournament, in which he hoped one day to exhibit his prowess and knightly accomplishments. "One of these was the Pel (in Latin, *palus*), practised with a post, or the stump of a tree, about six feet in height, which the youth, armed at all points, attacked vigorously on foot; and while he struck or thrust at the different parts which were marked to represent the head, breast, shoulders, and legs of an antagonist, he was taught to cover himself carefully with his shield in the act of rising to the blow. Similar to this was the Quintain, where the attack was made on horseback. A pole or spear was set upright in the ground, with a shield strongly bound to it, and against this the youth tilted with his lance, in full career, endeavouring to burst the ligatures of the shield and bear it to

the earth. A steady aim and a firm seat were acquired from this exercise, a severe fall being often the consequence of failure in the attempt to strike down the shield. This, however, at the best, was but a monotonous exercise, and therefore the pole in process of time was supplanted by the more stimulating figure of a misbelieving Saracen, armed at all points, and brandishing a formidable wooden sabre. The puppet moved freely upon a pivot or spindle, so that unless it were struck with the lance adroitly in the centre of the face or breast, it rapidly revolved, and the sword, in consequence, smote the back of the assailant in his career, amidst the laughter of the spectators. . . . In addition to these exercises, the young squires and pages were taught to career against each other with staves or canes; and sometimes a whole party exhibited on horseback the various evolutions of a battle, but without the blows or bloodshed of a tournament.* Amidst all this preparation for the warfare that was to be the business of their lives, they did not forget to cultivate the gentler arts and accomplishments of peace. Like our young Squire, they learned to make "songes," and "indite;" to "pourtray" well, and "eke dance;" like him, they might often have been heard "singing" or "floyting" all the day.

He now entered upon a life involving many and peculiar duties. It was an essential principle of chivalry, that no office was sordid if performed with a worthy object; and so completely was this principle carried into effect, that the candidates for knighthood were not merely willing, but proud

* *Pictorial Hist. of England*, vol. i. p. 649.

to wait upon their superiors, and perform for them the most menial services. And truly the dignity of the person raised the employment and made it no longer menial ; the spirit in which it was performed gave it even grace and lustre.

The squires were divided into many different classes, according to the employments which they were appointed to : viz., squire of the body, or person, of his lady or his lord (the first of these services was a grade to the second) ; squire of the chamber, or chamberlain ; carving squire ; squire of the stable ; squire of the wine cellar ; squire of the pantry, &c. The most honourable of all these was the squire of the body, for that reason called also, squire of honour ; a post calculated to prepare the squire in various ways for the honours and duties of knighthood. Thus for a long time the youthful squire acquired in silence, while present in quality of carver at repasts and festivals, the art of expressing his ideas with propriety. The Lord de Joinville, in his youth, filled this office at the Court of St. Louis ; and in the palace of kings it sometimes devolved upon their children. Froissart particularly mentions that the young Count de Foix, like Chaucer's Squire, carved before his father. The other squires prepared the tables, supplied the guests with water for washing their hands, carried in the various courses of the entertainment, watched over the pantry and cellar, and were constantly attentive that those present were provided with everything they required. When the repast was over, they made arrangements for the amusements which followed, in which they *likewise took part*, with the damsels belonging to *the suites of the ladies of high rank*. After this,

squires served up to the company the spices, meats, claret, pigment, and hippocras, which ended such feasts. A bumper was also on going to bed, and that was called *vin ocher*. In these entertainments, as well as actual war, due gradation of rank was carefully observed by the knights and squires. The knight appropriated to themselves the most costly velvet and arms; and did not permit their squires to assume the same dress as themselves. Their robes were composed of scarlet, or cloth of gold, lined with ermine; the squires wore silver and the less expensive furs; while the dress of the people consisted of woollen stuffs of the common manufactured colours. So great was the attention, in short, which they paid to these matters, that when the knights chose to dress in damask silks, the squires were obliged to content themselves to satin; and if at any time the knights were permitted damask, then the knights were seen in robes of velvet stiff with gold. So in their armour and arms, the knights were careful to distinguish themselves from their squires; the latter being only allowed a slight cuirass, a sword, and a buckler; while a tough and weighty hauberk, and a double coat of linked mail, rendered the former nearly invulnerable. This being considered, it was certainly humane to make it a point of honour that no knight should attack a squire. Of all the services rendered by the squire to the knight, the most important were really those which were connected directly or indirectly with the grand object of the lives of knights, war. "When the knight mounted his horse, the squire of the body held his stirrup; and other

squires carried the various pieces of his armour, such as the brassards, the gauntlets, the helmet, and the buckler, on the road. With regard to the cuirass, or hauberk, the knight was no less careful of its preservation than the Greek and Roman soldiers were of their bucklers. Other squires bore the pennon, the lance, and the sword. While merely on a journey, the knight rode a short-tailed, ambling-paced horse—a palfrey or a courser; and the war horses were led by the squires, who always keeping them in their right hand, they were called dextriers. The war horse was delivered to the knight on the appearance of an enemy, or when he was about entering the field of battle: this was what they called mounting the great horse. When travelling, the squire carried his master's helmet resting upon the pommel of his saddle; and when preparing for fight, this helmet, and all the other parts of his arms, offensive and defensive, were given him by the different squires who had them in their keeping, all evincing equal eagerness in assisting him to arm. By this means they were taught the art of arming themselves on a future day, with the despatch and caution necessary for the protection of their persons. And, in fact, it was an art which demanded much skill and ability, to place together and fasten the joints of the cuirass, and the other pieces of armour; to fit and lace the helmet upon the head with correctness; and to nail and rivet carefully the visor or ventail.* When the battle began, and the knights on the heavy war horses had come to blows, the squires ranged

* M. de St. Palaye: as translated in the *Retrospective Review*, in a paper to which we may here generally express our obligations.

themselves behind their masters, to whom they had delivered their swords, and remained almost idle spectators of the battle. And this usage might easily be preserved, on account of the manner in which the cavalry were ranged; namely, in one long line, backed by another line, of squires. These, though not engaged in offensive war, were, however, busily employed in the preservation of their masters. In the terrible shock of the two adverse lines rushing upon each other with their couched lances, numbers were overthrown and wounded; and then, raising themselves up, snatched their swords, battle-axes, or clubs, to defend or avenge themselves, while others endeavoured to seize every possible advantage over their fallen enemies. On these occasions, the squires were attentive to the movements of their masters, furnishing them with new arms, warding off the blows which might be aimed at them, bringing fresh horses for renewed combat, or taking care of whatever prisoners they made in the field. A delightful illustration of one of these duties—that of aiding in the defence of the knight in actual battle—is afforded by Froissart in his narrative of the battle of Poitiers. The French king John fought on foot, in the very midst of a dense crowd of combatants; and had close by his side his son Philip, a boy of sixteen; who, constantly watching his father, and heedless of his own danger, kept crying out to him when he saw a blow aimed, “Father, guard yourself on the right!”—“Father, guard yourself on the left!” and thus probably contributed to save the life of the French sovereign, who was soon after taken prisoner.

We have before alluded to the honourable spirit
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in which these services were received by the knights; and which, no doubt, was the true secret of the spirit in which they were rendered. From the records of the same battle we may adduce an example of the knightly behaviour to the squire. Among the English noblemen who more especially distinguished themselves at Poitiers, was the Lord James Audley, who, "with the aid of his four squires, fought always in the chief of the battle: he was sore hurt in the body, and in the visage; as long as his breath served him, he fought: at last, at the end of the battle, his four squires took him, and brought him out of the field, and laid him under a hedge side for to refresh him; and they unarmed him, and bound up his wounds as well as they could." This had scarcely been done, before a message came from the Black Prince, who had evidently been full of admiration of Lord Audley's conduct; and which message gave such new life to the wounded knight, that he caused himself to be borne in a litter to the Prince; who took him tenderly in his arms, kissed him, made him "great cheer," and in the presence of the most distinguished of the English knights, said to him aloud, "Sir James, I and all ours take you in this journey for the best doer in arms: and to the intent to furnish you the better to pursue the wars, I retain you for ever to be my knight, with five hundred marks, of yearly revenues, the which I shall assign you on mine heritage in England." This was a noble act of the Prince's; let us see whether Lord Audley's conduct has not added fresh lustre to it. On his return to his tent, he sent for several noblemen of *his lineage*; and then making them his witnesses, *at once divided among his four squires, for them*

and their heirs, the entire gift he had just received. But the squires had also the opportunity afforded them of exerting their powers in battle for their own especial advantage; such, for instance, as in the taking of prisoners. As a proof of this, we may narrate a very interesting incident that occurred during Chaucer's lifetime, in the vicinity of his own residence and labours as a clerk of the works at Westminster, and in connection with his friend, relative, and patron, the great duke of Lancaster.

At the battle of Najara, in Spain, during the Black Prince's campaign in that country, two of Sir John Chandos' squires took a Spanish nobleman prisoner; and who, according to the custom of the time, was formally awarded to them by the Prince himself, and Sir John. The squires took their prize to England; but soon allowed him to return home in order to collect his ransom money, detaining meanwhile the nobleman's eldest son. Time passed, and brought no news of the nobleman or the ransom money. But now a new state of things arose. John of Gaunt, in the prosecution of his claims upon Spain, desired to get hold of the hostage, in order to make political use of him; and induced the King, Richard, to demand him from the squires. They were willing to render him on receipt of the ransom money, which John of Gaunt was by no means willing to pay; so no prisoners were forthcoming. Search was everywhere made for them, but in vain; and at last the two squires were committed to the Tower. They managed, however, to escape, and take refuge in the Sanctuary at Westminster. Enraged by their resistance, the duke did not hesitate to violate the *privileges of the place*, by sending an armed force

under the command of the constable of the Tower, Sir Alan Boxhall, to seize them by force, if they could not obtain possession of them by persuasion. One of them, Schakell, was prevailed upon to trust himself without the walls, and was immediately re-committed to the Tower; but the other, Haule, refused to listen to them, and, drawing a short sword, prepared to resist. They rushed upon him, but he defended himself with remarkable spirit and skill—twice they drove him round the choir of the abbey church, and still he seemed unassailable; when one of the cowardly assassins got behind him in some way unnoticed, and clove his head. And thus perished the brave squire; and with him one of the monks of the abbey, who nobly strove to protect him. To make the outrage still more gross, it took place during the performance of high mass. Even now—one of the squires dead, and the other in prison—no one could discover the prisoner; and it was not until the Court resolved to do at last what it ought to have done at first, and so have prevented the sacrifice of valuable lives, namely, pay the ransom due, that the mystery was cleared up, by a truly touching discovery of the person of the young Spaniard, in the groom that had served Schakell as a hired servant during the whole time of his imprisonment in the Tower, and had previously risked his own life in defence of Haule, at the time of the murder in the abbey; moved in some degree, perhaps, by personal attachment, but still more, we should say, by a chivalric sense of the wrong that was attempted to be done *the squires*, in defiance of all the usages of *chivalry*.

We must now follow our hero through the last

and long wished-for ceremonies which are to make him a knight—a member of that illustrious band whose glories have so dazzled his youthful vision. At the age of twenty-one he is eligible. Solemn and deeply impressive, even to the least imaginative of those concerned, were the rites attending the inauguration of the youthful warrior. He was first stripped of his garments, and put into the bath; on leaving this he was clad in a white tunic, as the symbol of purity; in a red robe as an emblem of the blood he was to shed in the cause of the faith; and, lastly, in a black doublet, as a token of the dissolution which awaited him as well as the rest of mankind. Thus purified and clothed, he kept a rigorous fast for twenty-four hours. When evening came, he entered the church, and there spent the night in solitude and prayer. His arms were piled upon the altar before him—an object of continual and fervent contemplation. His first act in the morning was confession, which it was expected should be more than usually strict and devotional; he then received the solemn sacrament of the Eucharist. The mass of the Holy Ghost was now performed, followed commonly by a sermon on the duties of a knight, and on the nature of the life opening upon the novice. His sponsors (certain approved knights) now accompanied him to the chancel or choir, and there pledged themselves for the rectitude of his future conduct. The priest then took the sword from the novice's neck, where it hung, and having blessed it, again attached it to his neck. But one thing now remained—the appearance before the hero or lord who was to confer the actual investiture of knighthood. To *him, therefore, the Squire* (soon to lose that title

for ever) went, and, falling upon his knees, demanded the honour to which he aspired. "To what end," inquired the lord, "do you desire to enter into this Order? If it is that you may be rich, repose yourself, and be honoured without doing honour to knighthood, then you are unworthy of it, and would be to the knighthood you should receive, what the simoniacal clergyman is to the prelacy." A modest but collected and dignified answer to this question was expected; which given, the lord granted his request, and the proper oath was administered. Then came thronging round the young man knights, and frequently ladies, assisting him to arm; putting on first the spurs, then the hauberk; next the breastplate,—the brassarts, or arm-pieces,—and the gauntlets; and lastly the sword. Then he was dubbed, to use the modern English expression, derived from the French *adoubé*, or adopted. The lord rose from his seat, went up to him, and gave the *accolade*, or three strokes with the flat of his sword upon the shoulder or nape of the neck, adding, sometimes, a blow with the palm of the hand upon the cheek, saying, "In the name of God, Saint Michael, and Saint George, I make thee a knight;" and, occasionally, concluding with "Be thou brave, bold, and loyal." They now handed to the youthful knight his helmet, and brought him his horse, upon which he sprang, "vaulting like the feathered Mercury" into the saddle, and, brandishing his sword and lance, caracolled his horse along the pavement. On quitting the church, he exhibited his grace and dexterity in a similar manner to the *populace outside*; whom he found eagerly waiting *for their share of the spectacle*.

We may add, there were classes of esquires who never advanced beyond that dignity.

It often happened, that one who had finished his warlike apprenticeship, and received his knight's fee (the land that was to support him for life, and which he had generally by inheritance), was indisposed or unfit to spend the rest of his life in the toils of war, and made no effort to get himself dubbed. Such an one might be styled by courtesy, knight, among his country neighbours. There were other squires, again, who would fail in obtaining the necessary qualification, — a knight's fee,—and were therefore excluded from knighthood. Statutes were passed to compel squires who had the suitable requisites of birth and fortune to claim knighthood, on peril of distraint on their lands ; so that they might show themselves properly trained in arms, and provided with accoutrements, for the service of their lords, the king, and the country. But as time passed, and the English nation grew more intent on pursuits alien to war, and the introduction of artillery made the study and practice of war more the business of a class than of the nation generally, there was less and less necessity for compelling men to become soldiers whether they liked it or not ; and so a large number of squires, comfortably settled on their feudal manors, came at last to be roused from their life of peaceful enjoyment only when some very pressing occasion kindled the old fires ; then down from the walls of the English manor-houses were plucked the sword and buckler, often rusted with disuse, and the coat of mail was donned, and forth sallied the fine old *English gentleman* to fight, or seem to fight, for loyalty, friendship, or patriotism. We

may especially instance the times of the Commonwealth. The last change would be, when dubbing ceased altogether; and the knight, and the landed squire, alike merged into that respectable class which is still identified with country life—the peaceful, well-to-do, Country Squire of modern days.

THE YEOMAN.

AFTER the descriptions of the Knight and the Squire, Chaucer continues—

“A yeoman had he, and servants no mo,
At that time, for him luste to ride so;
And he was clad in coat and hood of green;
A sheaf of peacock arrows, bright and keen,
Under his belt he bare full thriftily.
Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly:
His arrows droopèd not with feathers low,
And in his hand he bare a mighty bow.
A not-head* had he, with a brown visage,
Of woodcraft could he well all the usâge.
Upon his arm he bare a gay bracer,†
And by his side a sword, and a buckeler,
And on that other side a gay daggere
Harnessed well, and sharp as point of spear.

* A name still given in the North to the knob at the end of a staff. Tyrwhitt thinks it should be nut-head, that is to say, like a nut, from the hair being cut short; since called a Round-head, for the same reason.

† “A bracer,” says Ascham, “serves two purposes: one to save the arrow from the string when loosed upon it, and the coat from creasing; and the other that the string, gliding *sharply* and quickly off the bracer, may make a *sharper* shoot.”

A Christopher* on his breast, of silver sheen.
A horn he bare, the baudrick was of green.
A forester was he soothly as I guess."

In the yeoman (an abbreviation of yeonge-man, says Tyrrwhitt) we have a fine example of a class which included very much of the pith and power of English manhood in the old warlike times, and to which we can trace a large proportion of the robust qualities of our present powerful middle order. His brown visage is stamped with hearty honest manliness, derived from the vigorous exercise of such faculties as it has pleased his Maker to endow him with. This is a lusty fellow to sing and laugh with the best. Why not? He has a clear conscience, and pure intentions: though Chaucer does not directly tell us so, we are as confident of it as if he had; for these virtues are, to our mind, guaranteed by that mastery of, and love for an honest vocation, shown in his dressing his tackle so yeomanly, in his knowing so well all the usages of woodcraft, and generally in his graceful and gallant equipments. And truly, a more picturesque description of a picturesque personage one could hardly desire; and that description obtains now a new value, from its enabling us to form an opinion of the yeoman character and class; which, most important at the time of Chaucer, and for several centuries before and after, have in the end so dwindled away, or changed, that the commen-

* St. Christopher, as the patron of field sports, and as presiding also over the state of the weather, was of course pre-eminently the forester's guardian saint, the object of his especial veneration, the power which of all others among the *saintly class* it was his interest to propitiate.

tators of Chaucer seem quite unable to give us anything like a comprehensive or definite view of them. Nothing but scattered hints, or isolated facts, and these latter often contradictory, do we find, either in their writings or elsewhere. The obscurity in which the subject rests, is curiously manifested in their bewilderment as to why the squire should have an attendant, and the knight none. One cuts the Gordian knot by assuming that the yeoman must be, after all, the knight's servant (Tyrrwhitt); whilst another, equally decisive, asserts, Chaucer intended no such thing; and favours us with his own theory, that the fact of the knight's being without a servant, is "in unison with his reserved and unassuming character" (Todd). All the while, it is not perceived, that the son of the knight has no independent standing; and it is hardly observed, that the absence of any badge of servitude, such as it was usual for ordinary servants of the nobility and gentlemen to wear, and the character of our yeoman's arms, approximating to those worn by persons of gentle blood, give reason to infer, that he is no menial or serf, but a free-born man, standing in the front ranks of the common people; and, in all probability, a servant by feudal tenure only, rendering a limited attendance for lands that he holds of the knight and his family. Waterhous refers to this class of yeomen, who, "having been servants or tenants to great men, have either had land given to them, or by industry and thrift (blessed by God) been purchasers of land *in fee* to them and their heirs; and that in such sort for the quality, and in such proportion for the value, that the law requires *jurymen to be made of*," &c. The truth is, yeoman

life had many phases, including many degrees of servitude, many varieties of landholders, and many kinds of feudal obligation. Some possessed considerable patrimonies. Yeomen are mentioned, who lived about half a century after Chaucer, that were able to spend out of their freeholds as much as 130*l.* a year. Chaucer's miller speaks of his "estate of yeomanry," a property that was evidently often held in connection with some of the trades that more directly sprang from the cultivation of land—as that of millers, farmers, maltsters, &c.; whose fee to the lord would be generally paid in kind, as meal, malt, or some other produce, as an acknowledgment that the right of the land still lay in the lord. The military yeoman would in most cases be supported by the income his land yielded, as the knight was by *his*; and when it fell short, he would eke it out with the spoils of battle, and with actual pay, when he served abroad, or for any great length of time at home. We should guess, from the value and character of our yeoman's accoutrements, that his patrimony is capable of supporting him pretty handsomely while he is roving about, and that he belongs to the class just mentioned—that of the military yeomen. The training of these soldiers, though carried on in a somewhat desultory manner, may be said to have begun like the squire's, in childhood, and to have been steadily continued up to the period of active service. It consisted, in addition to the ordinary and popular sports by which the frame was sought to be rendered robust and agile—such as running, leaping, wrestling, swimming, and so on—of a modification of the warlike sports of the young nobility. Thus the quintain was permitted to the

commoner, on the substitution of a sand-bag and a board for a shield and a Saracen. The quarter-staff, peculiarly an old English weapon, and a truly formidable one, in the use of which the yeoman was almost without a competitor, consisted of a heavy stick, four or five feet in length, on the middle of which closed the hand with a grasp of iron, while the combatant slipped his other hand to either extremity with marvellous rapidity; and thus, unless the stroke were escaped with equal quickness of eye and foot, brought the weapon suddenly down on the head or shoulders of the antagonist. In defence it had equal merit; a turn of the wrist sufficing to guard the combatant on every side for a wide range, so that to approach him was next to impossible. Until very recent times, the quarter-staff has been a favourite sport at our country fairs and holiday meetings; but at present, as far as we can learn, the art and mystery of quarter-staff has fairly ceased from the land. The fond mothers of our degenerate days would shriek in terror, to see their children engaged in such dangerous sports, as the youth of Chaucer's time, from high to low, were taught to delight in. It is certainly no longer a desideratum that the growing generation should be trained to war; but, at the same time, they are not likely to be trained to that firm development of their physical organs, which war training gave them, and which is one of the first of earthly blessings. Modern effeminacy produces a train of miseries not less real or important, though less obvious to a superficial view, than the ferocity which throws so deep a shadow over the habits of our hardy ancestors.

Chaucer's yeoman is evidently one equipped for

"real service," according to the statutes of his time ; which required a bow of the archer's own height, with arrows a yard in length, notched at the extremity to fit the string, and fletched with the feathers of the goose, the eagle, or the peacock. The use of this instrument was taught with exceeding care. Bow and arrows entered into the education of children ; and *would have been* the favourite sport of youth, but that it was too much forced on them by edicts of kings, and the authority of nobles. By a law of the thirteenth century, every person having an annual income of more than one hundred pence, was obliged to furnish himself with a serviceable bow and arrows ; and in the reign of Edward III. all persons were compelled by proclamation to practise archery on a certain number of days in the year, excepting during the hours of divine service ; and at the same time a number of rustic sports were strictly forbidden, that they might not, we suppose, waste the time or energies required for this important exercise. In every village were three kinds of marks set up : the butt, or level mark, in the form of a target with a bull's eye, shot at up and down, and on either side, and requiring a strong arrow with a very broad feather ; the prick, a "mark of compass," requiring strong light arrows, with feathers of moderate size ; and the rover, a mark used at various distances, therefore requiring arrows proportioned in weight and feather. Sports similar to that of the popinjay, so admirably described by Scott in 'Old Mortality,' had of course a most important effect in keeping alive the national love of the truly national weapon, and developing the matchless skill and dexterity, for which the English archers or

yeomen became so renowned throughout Europe. No wonder, therefore, they gloried in the bow, and the knight gloried in his lance, and the squire in his sword. Many of the great victories that are emblazoned in our national annals, may be ascribed chiefly to the stout old English archers; and especially the greatest of all, that of Azincourt, where we scarcely know which to admire most, the "bright consummate" military genius of Harry the Fifth, by whom that marvellous encounter was directed and stimulated; or the heroic daring and astonishing skill of the archers, by whom virtually it was won.

One trait of our yeoman yet remains to be spoken of. His coat and hood of green, his hunter's horn, with the baudrick of the same sylvan colour, and the Christopher of silver, that, in spite of the sumptuary laws interdicting yeomen and a beneath them from wearing ornaments of the precious metals, gleams on his breast, make us aware even if we did not see it so stated by the poet in direct words, that he is a forester. A forester! what delightful associations start into life at the sound of that word,—of Robin Hood and his bold outlaw of the umbrageous greenwoods, of the red deer bounding from the dingle through the tall waving grass, and of all the pleasant sights and sounds, that give their own peculiar music and sunshine to the ancient forest life!

So much of the enjoyment of royalty and nobility was derived from the chase, and so large a part of their revenues from the preservation of game, that peculiar laws were required for the regulation and government of forests. These laws prove a sad source of oppression, when the Normans

possessed themselves of the country; for they were then used as the means of lowering the native English, and making them feel that their beautiful land, whose pride was then its rich woods and meads, must no longer be theirs, but the property of strangers; who, if the dogs of the Saxon inhabitants happened to stray within the wide limits that it pleased them to mark out and call their "forests," mercilessly maimed the poor brutes for the rest of their days; or if their owners committed but a slight trespass, would hang them up on the nearest tree without judge or jury. By the great charter of King John, every freeman might have in his woods eyries of hawks, sparrowhawks, falcons, eagles, and herons; but it was pretty nearly the period of the yeoman of the poet, before these rights became more than parchment ones. The bold barons, however,—who, if they practised oppression sometimes for their own ends, at least had the merit of resisting it in their kings—made genuine, at last, those and the other rights of Magna Charta, on which the stately superstructure of our national freedom has been gradually raised.

With the Knights and the Squires *their* Yeomen have also passed away. Such causes as the decline of the use of the bow by the English, on the introduction of gunpowder, the breaking up of the forest system, and the obliteration gradually of feudal tenures, fully account for the extinction of the gallant old English yeoman order, or rather its absorption into other orders, of which the chief that retains the name is the body of small freehold proprietors in the country districts.

SECTION III.

RELIGION.

IF we regard simply the period of Chaucer, undoubtedly the most peculiar feature of the age was that one upon which we have dilated at some length—Chivalry; for, as it had not long before sprung into importance, so it did not noticeably last long after; its influences were almost as brief as they were brilliant; and but for the pages of those, who by a remarkable coincidence lived during its palmy days, and chronicled the events and the actors of that graceful and imaginative system of bloodshedding in its own spirit—but for Froissart and Chaucer, chivalry would indeed have become to us of the present day an utterly effete thing. But there was a sweet savour of humanity beneath this scheme so elaborately developed for the destruction of all the best human interests, however little business it had there; and the historian and the poet saw it, and have in consequence taken care that the world to the end of time shall see it too. Could they have given us a finer moral?—If our common nature can be so noble, exhibit so much grace and beauty, and self-denial, under circumstances of such others the most adverse to the development of those qualities, what, let us ask ourselves, may it not become, whenever we shall surround it by influences that shall be of all others the most favourable?

Chivalry, then, was undoubtedly the peculiarly characteristic feature of the age of Edward III. and Chaucer; but if we look to a wider period,—to the middle ages generally, the state and phenomena exhibited by religion, become of infinitely mightier importance; whilst even in connection with the poet's own era, there are circumstances in its history of much more intrinsic moment than the rise and fall of such a melancholy artificiality as that above named. Then it was that the movement commenced under Wycliffe, which was destined to break up the most imposing system of religion the world had ever witnessed; for though the actual and visible destruction did not take place until the Reformation, there can be no doubt that the foundations had been long before undermined by our early English reformers. But destroyed though the system was, the destruction was a very different matter from that which overtook chivalry. To this hour many of its elements are active throughout society; nay, there are some who fancy they perceive the work of re-combination, to a state very nearly approaching the former state, going on throughout Europe. If this view be rejected as incorrect, as unquestionably we think it ought, we may all own, and be grateful for, the many benefits that we enjoy through the religion and the religionists of the middle ages. To them we owe the most consummate of all architectural works, even in their present state—our cathedrals; and to them we *may* owe the knowledge, how to restore these buildings to their pristine splendour; when not architecture only, but sculpture and painting also, lavished their wondrous skill upon *the houses of God*: we may also owe to them, if

we will, the devoted hosts of worshippers who ought to be constantly seen in them, rich and poor, nobles and labourers, indiscriminately mingled together, all touchingly acknowledging a common origin and end.

To them we owe the cultivation of the love of music among the people, by familiarizing them with it through all the services, processions, and festivals of the church ; and to them we may owe a better state of feeling, than that which has recently allowed the musical performances of our cathedral choirs to be mutilated, on the paltriest grounds ; when, too, such choirs had become rich beyond measure in the sublimest ecclesiastical *and English* music.

We owe to them our drama, which sprang out of the early church mysteries ; and it would not be amiss if we were to owe to them a somewhat loftier notion than at present prevails, of the objects that theatrical representation should aim at. To them do we owe the revival of learning, and in a great degree our Grammar Schools ; and to them we may owe the multitudes of students that ought to be able to flock to them, as of old, when Oxford University alone had its 30,000 scholars.

We owe to them many a noble work of charity, that still here and there stud the country over ; the relics merely of a scheme of benevolence, unrivalled for magnificence and completeness ; and to them, again, we may owe the right principles of dealing with the poor—principles which can make a bad system to some extent good, but the absence of which must leave the best system worthless ; in a word, we owe, or may owe to them, a sympathy *with the poor that must exhibit itself in practical efforts for them.*

Lastly, we owe to them an unending debt of gratitude for their services in the cause of literature and science. For ages, who but the monks and friars were the literary and scientific labourers of England? its poets, its historians, its philosophers, its botanists, its physicians, its educators? Where but in the libraries of the monasteries, were the collections of the accumulated wisdom of ages to be found, each day beholding additions to the store, through the labours of the scribes of the *Scriptorium*? And, when at last printing came to revolutionize the entire world of knowledge, who but the monks themselves, of Westminster and St. Albans, was it, that welcomed the new and glorious thing in the most cordial spirit—providing at once for the art and its disciples a home?

Let us now look at the system of which these were the better points; the worse, Chaucer will show us by and bye, with an unsparing hand. In glancing over the different “rounds” of the spirit’s ladder, by which the men, who in the middle ages devoted themselves to the service of religion, sought to raise themselves—

“ From this gross and visible world of dust,
Even to the starry world,”—

four distinct stages may be perceived; the highest occupied by the monks, who were for all practical purposes as lost to their fellow-men, as if they were really what they desired to be, half absorbed into the heaven they had so nearly approached; then, duly succeeding each other downwards, the regular canons, the secular canons, and lastly the parochial clergy; whose especial duty it was, in *complete* opposition to that of the monks, to mingle

among and instruct their fellow-men. To these must be added the friars, whose position may perhaps be best described for the present, as that of a body desiring to include all the special excellencies of all the other bodies, and who enjoyed a peculiar organization accordingly.

When the prophet Elijah retired to the wilderness, we had, say Catholic writers, the first foundation of monachism. But if we give a somewhat stricter and more just interpretation to the word, we should say that its real commencement may be referred to the earliest periods of Christianity; when many of the new converts signalized their devotion and zeal by adopting an extraordinary severity of life and religious discipline, and who became known as *ascetics*, or *exercisers*. The earliest and most remarkable people of the kind were certain Egyptian Jews, called the Therapeutæ, or Essenians, inhabiting the banks of the Lake Mareotis, who embraced Christianity soon after its promulgation; and, observes Gibbon, "the austere life of the Essenians, their *fasts* and excommunications, the community of *goods*, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth, though not the purity, of their faith, already offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline." To these succeeded the Egyptian ascetics, properly so called, who carried still further the principles of their progenitors. "They," continues the same writer, "seriously renounced the luxuries and the pleasures of the age; abjured the use of wine, of flesh, and of marriage; chastised their body, mortified their affections, and *embraced a life of misery as the price of eternal happiness.*" There remained but one step more to

realize monachism in all its essentials: that was the establishment of regular communities, to which those who desired to renounce the world in the body, as well as in the spirit, might repair. And in the reign of Constantine, leaders arose to induce the ascetics to take that step; and to obtain for themselves, the title of the immediate founders of the strange and wonderful system, that was for many centuries to exercise the most important influence over the spiritual and temporal affairs of the eastern world. These leaders were Egyptians, their names Paul and Anthony; the former, as St. Jerome explains, the author of the new mode of life, the latter its illustrator. One powerful motive with these Egyptian Christians for desiring retirement, appears to have been the persecution that had raged, previous to the accession of Constantine, against the disciples of the new faith; but a still greater impulse existed in the earnest, intrepid character of Anthony, whose reputation was incalculably enhanced by the stories of the supernatural "visitings" to which he was subject; although after all, it was by a disciple of Paul and Anthony, named Pachomius, and not by themselves, that the first monastery really seems to have been established. And once begun, it is surprising with what rapidity the system progressed. "The prolific colonies of monks multiplied with rapid increase in the sands of Libya, upon the rocks of Thebais, and in the cities of the Nile. To the south of Alexandria, the mountains and adjacent desert of Nubia were peopled by five thousand anachorètes; and the traveller may still investigate the ruins of fifty monasteries which were planted in *that barren soil* by the disciples of Anthony. In

the upper Thebais, the ancient island of Tabennisi was occupied by Pachomius and fourteen hundred of his brethren. That holy abbot successively founded nine monasteries of men and one of women; and the festival of Easter sometimes collected fifty thousand religious persons, who followed his angelic rule of discipline." Gibbon refers, in the last words, to the mode in which Pachomius said to have received his rule or code of rules for monastic life, namely, by special revelation from an angel. From Egypt, monachism quickly spread abroad over the world; Hilarion took it to Palestine, St. Athanasius to Rome, Eustathius to Armenia, St. Basil to Pontus, and St. Martin to Gaul; whence, lastly, Pelagius introduced it into the islands.

Omitting from our brief notices any mention of the thousand and one fantastic shapes into which monachism branched, it will be sufficient here to observe that the great body of monks ultimately acknowledged one rule, and adopted therefore one mode of life and discipline. The founder of this rule was St. Benedict, who however borrowed largely from St. Basil's earlier rule. He was born in Italy, about the year 480; and at the tender age of fourteen, hid himself in a cavern in a desert for a considerable time, where he was supplied with provisions through the care of a friend, who had to descend with them by a rope. The fame of this ascetic soon spread, and people flocked to him from all quarters. About 528 he removed to Mount Cassino; where, having converted the inhabitants from paganism, and overthrown the statue of *Apollo*, he founded the order bearing his name, which quickly spread all over Europe. It was in

roduced into England by St. Augustine and his brethren in 596, when they came to convert the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian religion. So rapidly did the order progress here in public estimation, that its revenues in the course of time exceeded the revenues of all the other monastic orders put together. All the abbeys in England prior to the Norman conquest were filled with its votaries; and, down to the Reformation, all the mitred and parliamentary abbots, excepting the prior of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, were Benedictines. The number of Benedictine monasteries in this country, as given by Tanner, was 113, with a collective revenue valued at the dissolution at 57,892*l.* 1*s.* 11*d.*; there were also 73 houses of Benedictine Nuns, with a revenue of 7985*l.* 12*s.* 1*d.*; making in all 186 houses, with a revenue of 65,877*l.* 14*s.*

Suppose we now glance at the general tenor of a monastic day among the communities of this order.

The matin bell rings—it is two hours after midnight; and the monks rise from their beds, and put on their rough and unadorned garments, meditating the while upon their past misdeeds, and future amendment. At a given signal, all issue forth through the gate of the monastery, and proceed toward the church; pausing at the threshold to make their prayers for the excommunicated, with their heads humbly bowed towards the ground. Protracted as is the service performed in the sacred edifice, all parties are expected to share in it with the deepest sympathy, and most unflagging attention; and woe be to him whom the prior may find asleep, as he goes his rounds through the church, with *his* dark-lantern and stealthy step. But even

the most zealous, no doubt, experience a sense of relief, when some incident occurs to break the dreary uniformity of the proceedings. The general sins of the monks may be black enough, and the necessity of general pardon great ; but it is evident how much more interest is felt when brother — gets up, and in broken language, acknowledges to the abbot some evil desire that has just crossed his mind, and made him unmindful of the sacred duties of the place, and for which he beseeches his abbot for God's mercy :—both are granted by the abbot. Mark too, in spite of all attempts at concealment how, many a neck is outstretched, and how all eyes are turned brightly and inquiringly towards the new novices, who advance to lay their petition upon the altar, and who then prostrate themselves before the whole congregation, into which they thus stand to be admitted. Perhaps they are but of tender years ; in that case the parents, wrapping their hands in the altar-pall, promise to leave them nothing, in order that they may afterwards have no temptation to quit the cloister and return to the world. Prime at last comes—it is six o'clock—the superior again gives the signal, and the monks leave the church for the monastery. Labour now demands attention. From prime till ten o'clock every monk is employed in accordance with his strength and ability. Some go to the distant mill to prepare the flour—and some to the oven to bake the bread of the community ; others resort to the garden, and a few to the workshop, where mechanical operations are carried on. But there is a species of work, which those who are fitted for it find so delightful as to form no inconsiderable compensation for all the enjoyments that they give

up when they quitted the great world without; that is the work of the Scriptorium; employing one, two, three, or four writers, in proportion to the wealth and rank of the abbey, and the taste and liberality of the abbot. Favoured then indeed are those chosen for the Scriptorium—and they know it. See how busily they ply the pen and the pencil. Here is one copying an old Greek classic, and looking occasionally very lovingly at another book of “Roman fame” that the abbot has just brought him to be next transcribed. What exquisite writing—how firm and bold his touch, even in the most elaborately ornamented capitals—how he pauses with head thrown back and turned aside, to look at the effect! Another monk of higher ability, is engaged, heart and soul, in illuminating a manuscript that his fellow-labourer has copied. As you look at him, forget not you behold the earliest English artist, properly so called. And mark, what grace and luxuriance of fancy he has lavished upon those descriptive borders! We will not say much for the drawing of the figures in some of his ambitious compositions; but what can be more gorgeous, and at the same time more harmonious than the colouring? Above all, look at the *sentiment* that he has infused into the face of the Virgin. Is it not indeed steeped in beauty and holiness? Ten o’clock comes. The sound of footsteps is heard; it is the monks leaving work, and coming to the library, each for a book, with which to wile away in the cloisters the next two hours before dinner; but the calligrapher and the illuminatist stir not—their work is their recreation, and they go on busier than ever. Twelve o’clock at last! they pause—shall they go to the Hall? No—they are too much in-

terested in what they happen to have in hand to-day, to quit the Scriptorium ; so they again proceed after the utterance, by one of them, of a pious blessing on the memory of that nobleman who appointed in some other monastery a daily provision of meat for the labourers in the literary vineyard to prevent the necessity of their being disturbed. Well, in the absence of such a provision in *the* monastery, let us hope the abbot will do as he has done before, quietly send them something from his own table.

Little as the monks of the Scriptorium may regard the hour of refection, it is a great era in the daily life of most other inhabitants of the monastery. See these monks in the cloisters a little before the time, how evidently impatient they are getting. They have tried again and again to go on with the book, but cannot succeed, albeit it be one of all the thousand and one temptations that some very excellent saints passed safely through. They have looked upon the pleasant green sward around them, which signifies "the greenness of their virtue above others," till they have grown undeniably humble as to their practical admiration of that virtue—on that single tree in the centre, which implies the ladder by which they aspire to celestial things until they feel uncommonly weary, and indisposed to climb. It must be owned, that the half hour before dinner is a very awkward time, to say the least of it, when men have eaten nothing since the previous evening. So, if they do break the rule for implicit silence—if some idle word, or gesture does excite laughter—or if the head and eyes will *forget to seek* the ground, St. Benedict himself *ought to be* able to make some allowance for it.

man nature in its extremest trials. Ah, there is the bell at last! Self-denial is easy now. One might almost suppose the monks after all did not want their dinner, so circumspectly do they walk towards it. In the blandest of tones are the words Brother and Nonno (grandfather) bandied about between the youthful and the older monks; with the meekest reverence does the junior monk ask benediction from the senior on meeting; or with the most polished courtesy does he rise, even after he has taken his seat, to offer it to the other, and only re-seat himself when bidden. Dinner commences. It is simple enough. Fish, vegetables, fruit; with a pound of bread to each monk; and three-quarters of a pint of wine to last him both for dinner and supper. Not a word is spoken. Whatever is wanted is asked for by signs. A passage from the Bible is read the while by one of the monks, who holds the office in due rotation with his fellows, for the space of a week. After dinner, or from about one to three o'clock, is the meridian, or time for sleep, unless any prefer reading; then labour again; then supper, consisting of a pound of bread, and the remains of the dinner wine; then vespers, or evening service; and lastly, to bed in the dormitory; where they sleep in their clothes, wearing their girdles, old and young intermixed; and where, if we may believe the satirist, the natural animal spirits of the monks, as men, will sometimes break out in irrepressible exuberance. The Frere, says Barclay, in his *Ship of Fools*, or

“— Monk in his frock and cowl
Must dance in his dorter, leaping to play the fool.”

To ensure the observance of such a system of life on the part of the inhabitants of the monastery, the abbot was entrusted with the most despotic powers; he could punish at his will and pleasure, either by simple confinement, by corporeal chastisement, or by expulsion. An amusing evidence of his supremacy, is furnished by the passage in the rule that bids the monk who may be told by his superior to do impossible things, that he is at liberty humbly to represent that they *are* impossible; but that if that appeal fail, he is to go on trying even to overcome the impossibilities, relying upon the assistance of God in his extremity. To aid the abbot, there were numerous officers of departments appointed; such, for instance, as the high cellarer, or steward; and there was also, in very large houses, a dean placed over every ten monks. These were all chosen by the abbot; who was himself elected by the whole society;—a very important fact, as showing that the abbot of a monastery, in ordinary cases, must have been not only distinguished by the qualifications of a holy life, and a prudent, thoughtful mind, as required by the rule; but also by such personal qualities as could alone win the love and respect of his brethren, and induce them to elevate him to the abbatial chair. It appears, also, that in progress of time, various accomplishments were expected to be superadded. Thus, in the thirteenth century, the prior and convent of St. Swithin's at Winchester, recommending one of their brethren to the convent of Hyde, as a proper person to fill the abbacy then vacant, include among his other and more spiritual qualifications, *his knowledge of glossing, writing, illuminating, and chanting.*

Having thus shown (on the authority chiefly of the rule of "St. Maur and St. Beneit," of which Chaucer speaks) who, according to theory, were the kind of men fitted to be superiors of monasteries, and what, monks and monachism ought to be,—and what, no doubt, at their best they were—let us, while we "look on this picture," also look on "this," by Chaucer's vigorous hand :

" A Monk there was, a fair for the mastery ;*
 An out-rider that lovèd venerie ;†
 A manly man, to be an abbot able.
 Full many a dainty horse had he in stable ;
 And when he rode, men might his bridle hear
 Gingèling in a whistling wind as clear,
 And eke as loud, as doth the chapel bell,
 There, as‡ this lord was keeper of the cell.
 The rule of St. Maurè and of St. Beneit,§
 Because that it was old, and somdeal strait,
 This ilkè|| monk let olde thinges pace ;
 And held après the newe world the trace."

As to the text—

" That saith, that hunters be not holy men ;
 Ne that a monk when he is reckless ¶
 Is like to a fish that is waterless ;

* *A fair for the mastery*, i.e. one well fitted for the management of the community to which he belongs.

† Hunting.

‡ Or, in other words,—there, where this lord, &c.

§ Benedict.

|| Same.

¶ Mr. Tyrwhitt thinks Chaucer wrote *reghelles*, a Saxon compound signifying without rule ; "as the known sense of *rekkeles*, viz. careless, negligent, by no means suits with this passage." With due respect to so high an authority, we cannot but observe, that it seems to us the passage as it stands conveys the very sense the critic desires it should convey ; what is a reckless man, but one whom the ordinary *rules of conduct* have ceased to bind ?

'This is to say, a monk out of his cloister :—
 This ilkè text held he not worth an oyster.
 And I say his opinion was good :
 What, should he study, and make himselfen wood,*
 Upon a book in cloister, alway to pore ?
 Or swinkent† with his handes, and labour,
 As Austin bid' ?‡ How shall the world be serv'd ?
 Let Austin have his swink to him reserv'd.
 Therefore he was a prickasour§ a right :
 Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl|| of flight :
 Of pricking,¶ and of hunting for the hare
 Was all his lust ;** for no cost would he spare."

The love of hunting, which Chaucer has here described as so conspicuous a feature of his monk's character, receives numerous illustrations from the history of the religious houses of England. We find that the archdeacon of Richmond, on his initiation to the priory of Bridlington, in Yorkshire, in 1216, came attended by ninety-seven horses, twenty-one dogs, and three hawks. In 1256, Walter de Suffield, bishop of Norwich, bequeathed by will his pack of hounds to the king ; whilst the abbot of Tavistock, who had also a pack, was commanded by his bishop, in 1348, to break it up. A famous hunter, contemporary with Chaucer, was William de Clowne, abbot of Leicester, who died in 1377. His reputation for skill in the sport of hare-hunting was so great, that the king himself, his son Edward, and certain noblemen, paid him an annual pension that they might hunt with him.

The cell of which this monk was " keeper," was most probably one of those offshoots from the parent houses, which, though subordinate to the

* Crazy, mad. † Toil, drudge. ‡ Biddeth. § A hard rider.
 || Birds. ¶ Hard riding. ** Pleasure, delight.

latter, had their own officers and domestic management, and were sometimes very wealthy; occasionally, indeed, they grew into so much importance, as to achieve independence, and obtain the rank of a convent or priory. It is thus only that we can explain the fact of Chaucer's monk being able to have "many a dainty horse in stable," or to dress in the style that he does. No mere monk would have been allowed to keep to himself the requisite wealth; and the "keeper" or "lord" of an insignificant cell would not have had it to keep. In the Sutherland manuscript, the passage concerning the monk's bridle

"Gingèling in a whistling wind as clear,
And eke as loud as doth the chapel bell,"

is illustrated by golden bells on the bridle and trappings of the horse. The custom is supposed to have been borrowed from the knights; among whom it was made a matter of importance to have their bridles well hung with bells; and the neglecting to do so was looked upon as a mark of meanness or poverty. Arnaud of Marsan, an old troubadour, gives a reason for its observance:—"Nothing is more proper to inspire confidence in a knight, and terror in an enemy." Wycliffe, the contemporary, and, perhaps, friend of Chaucer, has a passage happily illustrative of the truth of Chaucer's description. In his 'Triologue' he inveighs against the priests for their "fair horses, and jolly gay saddles and bridles ringing by the way." The remainder of Chaucer's description is as follows:—

"I saw his sleeves purfled at the hand
With gris,* and that the finest of the land.

* Gris, a fine sort of fur.



The Monk and the Friar.

And, for to fasten his hood, under his chin,
 He had of gold ywrought a curious pin ;
 A love-knot in the greater end there was.
 His head was bald, and shone as any glas
 And eke his face, as it had been anoint.
 He was a lord full fat, and in good point.
 His eyen steep, and rolling in his head,
 That steamed as a furnace of a lead.
 His bootes supple, his horse in great estate ;
 Now certainly he was a fair prelâte.
 He was not pale as a forpined* ghost.
 A fat swan lov'd he best of any roast.
 His palfrey was as brown as is a berry."

We have already referred to the golden bells in the pictured representation of the Monk in the Sutherland manuscript ; in other respects also, that representation agrees minutely with the text, and sometimes illustrates it. The habit of the Benedictines was a black loose coat or gown of stuff, reaching down to their feet, with a cowl or hood of the same ; under that another habit, white, as large as the former, made of flannel ; and, lastly, boots on their legs. In the manuscript, accordingly, we have the black gown, with full sleeves, and a glimpse of the supple boots beneath. The monk has by his side two hounds, with blue collars and gilded buckles. The poet has remarked, that the sleeves of the monk's tunic were edged with fur, "the finest of the land," and doubtless as expensive as it was beautiful. One of Wolsey's ordinances for the reformation of the Benedictines, in 1519, was especially directed against this particular feature of monkish foppery.

Harry Bailly is very jocose with the monk, when

* Wasted

the latter's turn comes to tell a tale, on his superior fitness, in many respects, for the world, rather than to be shut up in a monastery. But the monk, says Chaucer, took all in patience, and presently begins his story, observing—

“ I will bewail, in manner of tragedy,
The harm of them that stood in high degree,”

and then proceeds accordingly, with the most intolerable perseverance, through the histories of the respective calamities of Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, &c. ; down to Cræsus, Peter of Spain, and Hugelin of Pisa ; and for aught that is apparent, may still intend to go on to the very end of the pilgrimage,—for he has previously informed the pilgrims, that he has got a pretty collection of tragedies at home in his cell, just one *hundred* in number,—but that the good knight's patience fails :

“ Ho ! quod the knight, good sir, no more of this ;
That ye have said, it right enough ywis,
And muchel more ; for little heaviness
Is right enough for muchel folk, I guess ;” &c.

Doubtless the pilgrims agreed with him, that “ *little* heaviness ” was “ right enough ; ” and a very different kind of story therefore follows.

THE PRIORESS.

“ There was also a nun, a prioress,” says Chaucer, in the commencement of his description of that delicate, tender-hearted, sentimental personage—one of the most celebrated, as it is one of the happiest, of the great poet's dramatic creations. The word ‘ nun ’ (Latin, *nonna*) is said to be derived from Egypt, and to signify a virgin ; other accounts make the original meaning of the

Latin word ‘a penitent.’ The earliest phase of female monachism appears to have been the custom common to all the religions of antiquity, of virgins dedicating themselves to the performance of divine worship; and which, in reference to Christianity, had become, by the latter part of the third century, a matter of frequent occurrence; as we learn from the writings of Cyprian and Tertulian. At that period also, whilst some of the ecclesiastical or canonical virgins, as they were denominated, continued, after their vows of self-sacrifice, to reside under the parental roof, others had already adopted the example of the monks, and formed themselves into communities. From that time their history becomes a part of the general history of monachism.

Nuns, like monks, had, on their entrance into the cloister, to undergo a novitiate of from one to three years before their admission into the order, to take the three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and to receive the tonsure. In the government of these houses there were sometimes, as in the case of the Gilbertines, no less than three prioresses associated together, taking the active duties of the office in rotation. These comprised matters of a varying kind. There were the nuns’ vestments, for instance, on the one hand, to be cut out, their making to be seen to, and when made, to be divided among the members; on the other, there were the chapters to be held, penances to be enjoined, licences or allowances to be granted or refused, sick to be visited and comforted. Of course respect and obedience were paid by all the nuns to their prioress; although she too had to *walk circumspectly* by the rules set down. She

was not at liberty to sit near any man in the convent, without some discreet sister between, nor elsewhere, if it could be conveniently avoided; a cogent reason, by the way, for the presence of the nun, the prioress's chaplain, who is always by the side of the fair governor, in the pilgrimage to Canterbury. The prioress was not even permitted to leave the dormitory of the convent after dinner without the company of some of her sisters. We must not omit to mention, that among her duties was at one period that of hearing confessions; but this was at last done away with, for an amusing reason:—it was found there was no end to the questions which female curiosity induced them to put. We should fear Chaucer's gentle prioress could not be quite absolved from this charge:—

“ There was also a nun, a Prioress,
That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
Her greatest oath n'as but by Saint Eloy;
And she was clepèd* Madame Eglantine.
Full well she sang the servicè divine,
Entunèd in her nose full sweetly.
And French she spake full fair and fetisly,†
After the school of Stratford-atte-Bow;
For French of Paris was to her unknow.”

The seminary which Chaucer so pleasantly satirizes for its bad French, is supposed by Mr. Warton to have been a fashionable place of instruction for nuns or novices: and the idea is not unsupported by the known facts. The ancient Benedictine nunnery of “Stratford-atte-Bow” was famous in Chaucer's time, and not improbably on account of its educational character. Philippe de Mohun, duchess of York, who died in 1431,

* Called.

† Neatly.

bequeathed to the prioress five shillings, and to the convent twenty shillings; a slight, but sufficient testimony, perhaps, of the grateful remembrance of instruction received there.

The prioress's very pretty little oath, when she did swear—and it must be remembered that our English ladies were not at all particular in such matters, even down to the times of good Queen Bess—has excited more contention among the commentators than one would have thought such a matter deserved. Warton says that St. Loy (the form in which the word appears in all the manuscripts) means, St. Lewis: but in Sir David Lyndsay's writings St. Eloy appears as an independent personage, in connexion with horses or horsemanship:—

“ Saint Eloy, he doth stoutly stand,
Ane new horseshoe in his hand.”

And again:—

“ Some makis offering to Saint Eloy,
That he their horse may well convoy.”

Whilst, lastly, Chaucer himself has a similar allusion in the Friar's tale. Some explain St. Eloy as St. Eligius.

The scrupulous nicety visible in the prioress's oath, in her singing, and in her pronunciation of the Stratford-atte-Bow French, extends to her behaviour at table, where she is a perfect example of what was good breeding in the fourteenth century:—

“ At meate was she well ytaught withal ;
She let no morsel from her lippes fall ;
Ne wet her fingers in her saucè deep.
Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,

Thatte no drop ne fell upon her breast.
 In courtesy was set full much her lest.*
 Her over-lippe wiped she so clean,
 That in her cuppe was no farthing† seen
 Of greasè, when she dranken had her draught.
 Full seemèly after her meat she raught."‡

And her mental characteristics and her dress are
 in fine harmony with her manners ;—

And sikerly§ she was of great disport,
 And full pleasànt, and amiable of port ;
 And pained her to counterfeiten cheer
 Of court, and be estately of mannere,
 And to be holden digne|| of reverence.

But for to speken of her conscience,
 She was so charitable and so piteous,
 She woulde weep if that she saw a mouse
 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
 Of smalle houndes had she, that she fed
 With roasted flesh, and milk, and wastel bread.¶
 But sorè wept she, if one of them were dead ;
 Or if men smote it with a yerde** smart.
 And all was conscience and tender heart.

Full seemèly her wimple ypinchèd†† was,
 Her nose tretis ;‡‡ her eyen grey as glass ;
 Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red ;
 But sikerly she had a fair forehead :

It was almost a spanne broad, I trow ;
 For hardily§§ she was not undergrow.||

Full fetise¶¶ was her cloak, as I was 'ware.
 Of small corál about her arm she bare

* Pleasure. † Not the smallest spot. ‡ Reached.

§ Certainly. || Worthy.

¶ A kind of cake-bread made from the finest flour.

** A rod.

†† Her wimple, or neckerchief, was ypinched or plaited.

‡‡ Long and well-proportioned. §§ Certainly.

|| Of a low stature. ¶¶ Neat.

A pair of beades, gauded* all with green ;
 And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen ;†
 On which was first ywritten a crownèd A,
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*"‡

The same tender motto appears to be referred to in 'The Squire of Low Degree,' where we find the following passage :—

" In the midst of your shield there shall be set
 A lady's head with many a fret ;
 Above the head writtén shall be
 A reason for the love of me ;
 Both O and R shall be therein,
 With A and M it shall begin."

Beads thus "gauded all with green," or silver gilt, or gold, are frequently mentioned in old wills, as in that of Eleanor de Bohun, duchess of Gloucester, 1399 : "Item, I devise to Madame and mother, the Countess of Erford, a pair of paternosters of coral of fifty beads, ornamented with gardes of gold," &c. ; and in other old writers of Chaucer's period, as in the pages of Gower, &c.

Our host, Harry Bailly, is evidently much struck with the Prioress, and nothing can be more gallant than his bearing towards her.

Addressing her, after the Shipman's tale, he says—

" My Lady Prioress, by your leave,
 So that I wist I should you not aggrieve—
 I woulde deemen that ye tellen should
 A talè next, if so were that ye would.
 Now will ye vouchèsafe, my lady dear?"

Who could reply otherwise than pleasantly to such insinuating politeness? "Gladly," says the

* Garnished.

† Shining—bright.

‡ Love conquereth all things.

amiable Prioress; and immediately tells a tale founded on an incident peculiarly calculated to arouse her feminine sympathies—the murder of a Christian child by the Jews in a far-off country. The Sutherland manuscript represents her thus engaged, with her right hand uplifted, as if calling the particular attention of the pilgrims to what she was saying; a little evidence of her habitual authority, perhaps unconsciously, breaking out; whilst in her left hand are seen the beads of coral. The artist has made her belong to the Benedictine Nuns, by the dress he has given to her—a black cloak over a white tunic.

The branches of the great order to which, as we have seen, Chaucer's Monk and Prioress belonged, were very numerous; historians have recorded the names of twenty-three, and others have been probably altogether overlooked. We shall here mention only three or four principal ones. The Cluniacs, the first offshoot from the Benedictine tree, were, it appears, Benedictines according to the *spirit* of the rule, which they thought had been too literally interpreted. But that was not the only object they had in view. Monachism, by the eleventh century, had fallen into a deplorable state, through France, England, and Spain; and it is said the religious houses were "so far from observing the rule of St. Benedict in them, that they scarce knew the name of it." The Cluniacs sprang up to redeem the religious bodies of Europe from their disgraceful state of ignorance and consequent sloth. Their virtual founder was Bernon, abbot of Gigni, in Burgundy—their nominal one, Odon, *abbot of Cluny*, under whose auspices the new order became formally established. ~~An~~ amusing

writer of the 13th century, Guyot de Provins, who seems to have possessed too great a restlessness of disposition to allow him to settle any where, or to any thing; went the round of the different orders, in order to see what he thought of them, that he might thus be able to attach himself permanently to the pleasantest. Hear his report of the Cluniacs:—"When you wish to sleep, they waken you; when you wish to eat, they make you fast. The night is passed in praying in the church, the day in working, and *there is no repose but in the refectory*, and what is to be found there? Rotten eggs, beans with all their pods, [and which, Du Cange says, were eaten,] and liquor fit for oxen. For the wine is so poor, that one might drink of it a month without intoxication."

The Cistercians, a second great Benedictine branch, suited our minstrel monk no better. And, considering that they coveted all kinds of desolate and solitary places, it was hardly likely that it should be otherwise. But Guyot seems to complain chiefly of their selfishness and hypocrisy. The abbot and cellarer he charges with eating and drinking of the best, and sending the worst to the refectory, for those who do the work. "I have seen," he adds, "these monks put pigsties in the churchyards, and stables for asses in the chapels. They seize the cottages of the poor, and reduce them to beggary." About 1128, and not long after its foundation on the Continent, this order was brought into England, where it obtained so much repute, while yet the first bloom of novelty was upon it, that monasteries sprang up with astonishing rapidity all over the country; until *there were not less than seventy-five Cistercian*

and converse both at home and abroad. In a word, says Guyot, "among these one is well shod, well clothed, well fed. They go out when they like, mix with the world, and talk at table." Some of the most interesting monasteries in England belonged to this order, as Waltham Abbey, Walsingham Priory, and St. Mary Overies, Southwark,—the burial-place of Chaucer's friend and fellow-poet—Gower. This order again had all sorts of divisions; chiefly distinguished from each other by the name of the member or saint whose particular reading of the rule they thought proper to follow. Thus, some leaned to St. Nicholas, as in the monastery of Bourne, Lincolnshire; some to St. Victor, as in that of Warmesley in Herefordshire; some to St. Mary of Meretune, as in that of Beckenham in Norfolk; and some (a very numerous body) to St. Norbert, bishop of Magdeburgh; these last called themselves Premonstratensians, or White Canons, and were so popular in England as to have no less than 35 houses scattered about. The two great military bodies, the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars, who mostly followed the rule of St. Augustin or Austin, and the greater part of the charitable hospitals spread so profusely over England, and especially by its waysides, for the reception and entertainment of poor travellers and pilgrims, were connected with the order of Austin Canons. For the honour of England, we must not forget to observe, that it produced one order of its own; the order of Gilbertine Canons; founded by Gilbert, son of Joceline of Sempringham, who was the rector of that place. *We cannot, however, say much for the originality of our countryman's order, since the women that*

belonged to it were simply Benedictine Cistercians, and the men, Austin Canon Premonstratensians : both lived under the same roof, but separated. There were 25 Gilbertine houses in England.

In the secular canons, we find a body nearly approaching that of the ordinary parochial clergy—who indeed may be said to have sprung from them. Whenever and wherever the Christian faith was introduced into a new part of England, there was sure to be found a few devoted spirits, living a kind of monastic life, but issuing forth constantly from their seclusion, either to instruct novices, perform the great offices of the church for members, wherever two or three were gathered together, or to penetrate still further into the midst of the spiritual darkness by which they were surrounded. As these little oases in the desert were generally formed into bishoprics, and became the seats of the diocesans, such early labourers in the cause of Christ became connected with the churches or cathedrals ; and have thus remained through all succeeding ages, down to our own time ; when, however, whether under the name of canon or prebendary, the essential features of the office have disappeared, chiefly in consequence of the growth of the last of the four bodies we named, the Parochial Clergy ; who, by the time of Chaucer, had reached pretty nearly their present eminence, as regards the number of parishes, churches, and officiating priests required for them. When Edward III., for the purposes of a tax, caused an enumeration to be prepared in 1371, there were found to be 8600 parishes ; and we may observe by the way, that this tax furnishes a striking illustration of our ancestors' ignorance of "*statistics*."

The assessment levied on each parish was 5*l.* 16*s.* but so egregiously had the government overrated the number of English parishes, that they had first calculated that a sum of 1*l.* 2*s.* 4*d.* from each would be sufficient: they fancied, in short, that there were some fifty thousand, instead of less than nine thousand parishes in the country. Passing over for the present, and for a reason that will be seen by-and-bye, the character of the parson which Chaucer gives us, as a sample of the parochial clergy, we proceed to notice the FRIARS, who were, at different periods, the best and the worst—the most popular and most revered, the most odious and most despised, of religious bodies.

THE FRIAR.

THE corruptions of the monastic life, of which we have seen a fair example in the person of Chaucer's "Monk," led to the establishment, in the thirteenth century, of a new order of religionists; who hoped to bring back to the church of Rome the respect and affection of the people, by renouncing the wealth, the pride, the indolence, and the sensuality that so universally characterized the existing religious bodies.

The earliest orders of mendicant friars were those established by St. Dominic de Guzman, called the Dominicans or Black Friars, in 1216, and by St. Francis of Assisi, called the Grey Friars, in 1223. Various other orders followed, which were ultimately suppressed; with the exception of the Carmelites and the Augustines. Four orders in

were thus established. Their success was extraordinary. The principles and practice of pure Christianity seemed to be once more revived. The people beheld with wonder and admiration, a body of men so devoted to their spiritual interests, as to adopt for their sake a mode of life that must necessarily be full of hardships and privations. "The friars," says Godwin, "had no magnificent palaces, like the monks—no thrones, painted windows, and stately architecture; they were for the most part wanderers on the face of the earth. In these respects they professed to act on the model of Christ and his Apostles; to take no thought for the morrow; to have no place 'where to lay their head;' and to be indebted for the necessaries of existence to the spontaneous affection and kindness of the people whose neighbourhood they chanced to frequent. . . . They exercised the occupation of beggars; and they undertook peremptorily to maintain in their sermons that Jesus Christ and his disciples demanded, and subsisted upon, the alms of their countrymen. It is not wonderful, that in the ages we are contemplating, persons holding out these professions should obtain the approbation of their contemporaries. But they did not stop here. Though beggars and wanderers on the earth, they determined to exhibit in their lives every proof of the most indefatigable industry. 'The lazy monk' had become a term of general disapprobation and obloquy. They resolved to be in all respects the reverse of the monk. They did not hide in cloistered walls, and withdraw themselves from the inspection and comments of mankind. They were always before the public, and were constantly employed in the pious offices of counsel, comfort,

admonition, preaching, and prayer. In pursuit of these objects they spared no fatigue; they hasted from place to place; and when their frames might be expected to be worn out with the length of way, they were still fresh and alert, without repose and almost without aliment, for all the effort of disinterested toil or Christian instruction, all the duties of men incessantly watchful for the salvation of their fellow-creatures. This was their labour, their study, their refreshment, and their joy." Lastly, may be noticed their most admirable exertions in the cause of learning. Their poverty, their hardships, and their incessant occupation, did not prevent them from mastering the subtleties of the scholastic literature and philosophy of the time, and from acquiring a reputation in the pursuit. The greatest intellects of the thirteenth and early part of the fourteenth centuries, were almost all mendicants. We find among them Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Albertus Magnus.

Aquinas and Scotus were the founders of various sects in theology; and for centuries their disciples continued to wrangle with each other. A few words on the essentials of their disputes, and the characters of the two eminent men we have named, may be useful in illustrating at once the absurd uses to which, in the main, learning was devoted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the zeal, knowledge, and talent, that were notwithstanding exercised on such unprofitable labour. Aquinas was by birth a nobleman; but he scarcely reached his fifteenth year, before he became by inclination a friar, having at that early age entered upon his novitiate in a convent at Nap

and, in spite of all attempts on the part of his family to alter his views, a friar he persisted in remaining. This precocity as to the choice of a vocation, did not, at first, appear to be accompanied by a corresponding precocity of intellect. The students nick-named him, the Dumb Ox. Aquinas's teacher, however, quietly remarked, that if the ox should once begin to bellow, the world would be filled with the noise. We need not here explain in detail how completely the prophecy was fulfilled—how the title of the Dumb Ox became exchanged for that of the Angelic Doctor, or for that of the Angel of the Schools. Among the anecdotes that have been preserved of him, there are two not unworthy of repetition, as attesting his wit, courage, and the estimation in which he was held. Pope Innocent the Fourth, on the occasion of some money being brought to him in Aquinas's presence, said, "You see that the age of the church is past, when she could say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "Yes, holy father," was the caustic reply; "and the day is also past, when she could say to the paralytic, 'Take up thy bed, and walk.'" The other story is as follows: Thomas was dining one day with King—afterwards Saint—Louis of France, when he started from a long reverie, and struck the table with violence, observing, "A decisive argument! the Manicheans could never answer it." He was reminded of the presence in which he was, and begged pardon; but the king was only anxious to have the particulars of this unanswerable argument; and called in his secretary immediately to have it taken down. Aquinas died in 1274. Of his tenets the most important was that the supreme power of the Divine grace; and in

this, and other matters of doctrine, his followers the Thomists became ranged in opposition to the Scotists, or followers of Duns Scotus; more especially upon that one which formed the peculiarly distinctive feature of the teachings of Scotus, the immaculate conception of the Virgin; which first became popular after a public disputation in Paris, in the beginning of the fourteenth century; where Duns Scotus having, as a commencement, demolished more than two hundred objections that had been put forth to his doctrine, proceeded to array a no less formidable number of direct arguments in its favour. A writer who was present says, he resolved the knottiest syllogisms of his adversaries with as much ease as Samson did the bands of Delilah. The result forms a still better evidence of the friar's subtle eloquence. The university was converted *en masse*; and then, as usual, unfortunately, with most public bodies, in most countries, and in most ages, having been themselves persuaded by reason, they thought it only necessary to persuade others by force; and so a regulation was passed, which rendered it necessary for every man who desired to take a degree, to swear to his belief in the immaculate conception.

The doubting, objecting character of Scotus's mind, coupled with the terrible doubts that hang over the circumstances of his death, (he is supposed to have been buried—of course unintentionally—alive), gave rise to the following epigram:—

“What sacred writings, or profane can show,
All truths were, Scotus, call'd in doubt by you.
Your fate was doubtful too: Death boasts to be
The first that choused you with a fallacy;

Who, lest your subtle arts your life should save,
Before he struck, secured you in the grave."

The writer might have included also in his doubts, the great doubt as to his birth-place—three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland, having contended for the honour. We need only add, that as Aquinas was the glory of the Dominican order, so was Scotus of the Franciscan.

From the period when these men thus helped to raise the great brotherhood of the friars to the culminating point of influence and real splendour, it was not long before a decline took place, as a natural consequence of the fact, that a more brilliant but more delusive prosperity began to attract the eye in every direction; here in the shape of monasteries of unusual architectural magnificence; there in the exhibition of individual friars exercising the most important influence in the temporal affairs of the world. As by the rules of their order the mendicant friars could not receive estates, the munificence of their patrons was displayed in the erection or adornment of their conventual buildings. Their churches in particular were very fine; and it became a custom for persons of the highest rank to be buried in them. In the noble church of the Grey Friars in London, which was finished in 1325, four queens and six hundred persons of rank were interred; and their tombs, many of them of the most sumptuous kind, remained up to the period of the dissolution. Mendicancy had indeed become fashionable; and the mendicants, as might be expected, grew ambitious, if they were clever and energetic; or sensual, when they wanted the talent or inclination to seek for anything higher *than personal ease and enjoyment.* Chaucer's friar,

whom we now introduce to our readers, is of latter description :—

“ A Frere there was, a wanton and a merry,
A limitour, a full solemne man.
In all the orders four is none that can *
So much of dalliance and fair language.
He had ymade full many a marriage
Of younge women, at his owen cost.
Unto his order he was a noble post.
Full well belov'd and familiar was he
With franklins over all in his country'.

* * * *

For he had power of confession
As said himself, more than a curáte,
For of his order he was licenciát.†
Full sweetely heard he confession
And pleasant was his absolution.
He was an easy man to give penánce,
There as he wist‡ to have a good pittánce ;
For unto a poore order for to give,
Is signe that a man is well yshrive ;§
For if he gave, he durste make a vaunt
He wiste that a man was répentant.
For many a man so hard is of his heart,
He may not weep, although him soré smart ;
Therefore instead of weeping and prayéres,
Men may give silver to the poore freres.”

In addition to all these striking recommendat
to sinners, who found it easier to open their poc
than their hearts, our friar has not neglected
prepare himself for those who might not req
his spiritual services.

* Knows.

† That is to say, licensed to hear confession.

‡ There, where he knew or expected he should rec
“ a good pittance.”

§ Or, in other words, that he has confessed “ well.”

" His tippet was aye farcèd* full of knives,
 And pinnes, for to given faire wives.
 And certainly he had a merry note.
 Well could he sing, and playen on a rote.†
 Of yeddings‡ he bare utterly the prize.
 His neck was whitè as the fleur de lis.
 Thereto he strong was as a champioun ;
 And knew well the tavernès in every town,
 And every hostèler, and gay tapstère,
 Better than a lazár,§ or a beggère ;
 For unto such a worthy man as he
 Accordeth nought, as by his faculty,
 To haven with such lazars acquaintance ;
 It is not honest, it may not advance,||
 As for to dealen with no such pouraille,¶
 But all with rich, and sellers of vitaille."

A man who has so many qualifications for public favour, and who can look so shrewdly after his own interests and dignity, could scarcely fail of success in any occupation, much less in that of the mendicant of the fourteenth century.

" And over all, there as profit should arise,
 Courteous he was, and lowly of servise.
 There n'as no man no where so virtuous.**
 He was the beste beggar in all his house ;
 And gave a certain fermè for the grant,
 None of his brethèren came in his haunt.††

* Forced (or stuffed) as we still say in cookery.

† A musical instrument, supposed to have been similar to the modern hurdy-gurdy.

‡ The meaning of the word "yeddings" is uncertain; songs or story-telling are most probably referred to. § Leper.

|| "Honest" is here used in the sense of creditable; and "advance" in the sense of profit. ¶ Offal.

** Active, indefatigable.

†† That is to say, he farmed or paid a certain rent for the right of begging "in his haunt," to which consequently none of his "brethèren" were allowed to come.

For though a widow hadde but a shoo,
 (So pleasant was his *In principio*)*
 Yet would he have a farthing ere he went.
 His purchase was well better than his rent.
 And rage he could, as it had been a whelo
 In lovèdays; there could he muchel helþ
 For there was he not like a cleisterer,
 With threadbare cape, as is a poor scholr
 But he was like a master or a pope.
 Of double worsted was his semicope,†
 That round was—as a bell—out of the press.
 Somewhat he lisped for his wantonness,
 To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
 And in his harping, when that he had sung,
 His eyen twinkled in his head aright,
 As do the starres in a frosty night."

Was there ever a more happy picture of one the best of boon companions? The very genuineness of his enjoyment makes one half in love with him. It is but too true, however, that we cannot from this description, think very highly of a worthy friar's piety, Christian zeal, or power of denial, which the *un-fashionable* church reform of the day (Chaucer and Wycliffe are among number) held to be indispensable to even a decent observance of the duties of his calling. And whilst the poet silently and indirectly, but surely attacked both monks and friars by contrasting exemplars of each class with the "poorè parson" Wycliffe made the country ring again with his sparing and almost indiscriminating invectives

* *In the beginning.* This evidently refers to some well-known passage, forming, in all probability, a part of the ordinary services of the church. The beginning of *Genesis*, and of *St. John's Gospel*, have each been mentioned and also a passage in the conclusion of *mass*.

† *Short cloak, or cape.*

the entire body of religionists of all kinds. In one of his works, he divided this body into twelve classes; beginning with the pope and ending with the mendicant friars; all of whom he denounces as anti-Christ and the proctors of Satan. Gradually the friars became even more odious, perhaps, than the monks had ever been, as they were more meddling and personally intrusive; and their fate excited the less regret, at the common ruin which awaited their establishments, at the dissolution of monasteries in the sixteenth century.

The friar is a "limitour," which Mr. Tyrwhitt defines as one licensed to beg within a certain district; and Junius, who gives a wider meaning to the term, as one who discharged his office generally within specified districts. These definitions most probably point nearly to the truth; for, as Dr. Jamieson has observed, in the 'Vision of Piers Ploughman,' the "limitour" appears as a confessor, who, by virtue of episcopal letters, although he had no parochial charge, was authorised to hear confession and grant absolution within a certain district. The love-day, on which the friar appears to have been in much request, is supposed by the commentators of Chaucer to have been originally a day appointed for the amicable settlement of differences; on which, when the business of the occasion was concluded, a feast was given to the arbitrators. But how is it that they do not, in connexion with the love-days, mention the Agapæ, or meetings, as the word signifies, of love and charity, of the early believers in Christianity, from which there seems every probability the love-days must have sprung? At these meetings, a common table was provided *by the contributions* of those who were able to give; and the entertainment concluded with the holy kiss.

coif upon his head. This "medley" dress continued to be worn even in Dugdale's time. The robes were then of three colours, murrey (or dark red), black furred with white, and scarlet. At present the arrangements are, a gown of black cloth for term time on ordinary occasions; violet coloured for Court or holidays; scarlet for processions to St. Paul's, dinners at Guildhall, or when they attend the House of Lords during the sovereign's presence; black silk for trials at Nisi Prius; which ought to be, but seldom is, exchanged for the scarlet, with the sentence cap, when called upon on circuits to try causes or prisoners.

We may observe, in conclusion, that among the exquisite touches of satirical description with which the Canterbury Tales abound, there are none happier than that which paints one of the little affections of the eminent lawyer:

"No where so busy a man as he there n'as,
And yet he seemed busier than he was."

Chaucer has described (in a passage that we shall transcribe elsewhere) his own personal appearance, as one of the pilgrims:—in connexion with the man of law, as the Sergeant is called, he further alludes to his previous writings, as though desirous to make a niche for them, too, in his great edifice—the Canterbury Tales. The Sergeant, while agreeing that he must do his best, like the other pilgrims, to contribute to the common fund of entertainment, observes,

"——— but nathèless certain
 I can right now no thrifty talè sain,
 But Chaucer (though he can but lewedly*
On metres and on rhyming craftily)

* Ignorantly.

THE SUMPNOUR.

As appendages to the ecclesiastical system, we may next notice the Sumpnour and the Pardoner,—two important personages in the management of ecclesiastical affairs during the middle ages, but now so completely fallen into oblivion, that their very names will doubtless appear strange to many of our readers. Both these characters show very strongly the bent of Chaucer's mind during an eventful period of church history. The bold exactions of which the first was the instrument, and the impudent cheats put upon the people by the other, had no doubt made them generally obnoxious; but still there was wanted a popular concentration of the popular idea to do them full justice; and this Chaucer furnished in the two masterly portraits before us. The one that will at present engage our attention is the Sumpnour, or Summoner—an officer employed to summon delinquents to the ecclesiastical courts, now known as an apparitor. In the 'Frere's Tale,' we have a complete view of the position and duties of this individual, from which it appears, that it was his business to seek out cases for the archdeacons to punish; cases of witchcraft,

“Of defamation and avouterie,*
 Of Church-reves,† and of testaments,
 Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,
 Of usur', and of simony also,
 But certes lechers did he greatest woe.”

Offenders of the latter description appear to have been the chief objects of his search; and he employed

* Adultery.

† Churchwardens.

*The Sumpstour.*

spies to inform him as to who were wealthy, and to draw those into temptation whom it "availed" to punish. This brief account will serve to make clearer one or two passages in the following description:—

"A Sumpnour was there with us in that place,
That had a fire-red cherubinn^es face;
For saucefleme* he was, with eyen narrow,
* * * * *
With scalled† browes black, and pillèd‡ beard
Of his visage children were sore afeard.
There n'as quicksilver, litarge, ne brimstone,
Boras, ceruse, ne oil of tartar none,
Ne ointement that woulde cleanse or bite,
That him might helpen of his whelkes§ white,
Ne of the knobbes sitting on his cheeks.
Well lov'd he garlic, onions, and leeks;
And for to drink strong wine as red as blood:
Then would he speak and cry as he were wood.||
And when that he well drunken had the wine,
Then would he speaken no word but Latine.
A few^e termes could¶ he, two or three
That he had learned out of some decree:
No wonder is,—he heard it all the day.
And eke ye knowen well, how that a jay
Can clepen** 'Wat!' as well as can the pope.
But whoso would in other thing him grope,
Then had he spent all his philosophy;
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, would he cry.
* * * * *

* In the 'Thousand Notable Things,' a prescription is given for "a sausefleame, or red pimpled face." Two of the ingredients are quicksilver and brimstone.

† Scarfy.

‡ Bald, or scanty.

§ In the work before mentioned we find it also stated that oil of tartar "will take away clean all spots, freckles, and filthy wheales." This last word means, we presume, the same as whelkes, a corrupt breaking out on the face.

|| Wild or mad

¶ Knew.

** Call.

Full privily a finch eke could he pull.*
 And if he found owheret† a good fellaw,
 He woulde teachen him to have none awe
 In such a case of th' archèdeacon's curse ;
 (But if‡ a manne's soul were in his purse,
 For in his purse he should ypunish'd be :
 Purse is the archèdeacon's hell, said he.—
 But well I wot he lièd right in deed ;
 Of cursing ought each guilty man him dread :
 For curse will slay right as assoiling § saveth :
 And also 'ware him of a *significavit*. ||
 In danger had he at his owen guise
 The younge girles of the diocise ;¶
 And knew their counsel, and was of their rede.**
 A garland had he set upon his head ;
 As great as it were for an alèstake :††
 A buckler had he made him of a cake."

We wonder whether Shakspeare had Chaucer's Sumpnour in his eye, when he makes Fluellen thus describe to Henry V. "one Bardolph, if your majesty know the man : his face is all bubukles, and wheelks, and knobs, and flames of fire." The de-

* Or, as a modern gambler would say, pluck a pigeon.

† Anywhere. ‡ But if,—except. § Absolving.

|| "This is a writ which issues out of the Chancery, upon a certificate given by the ordinary of a man that stands obstinately excommunicate by the space of forty days, for the laying him up in prison without trial or mainprize, until he submit himself to the authority of the church : and it is so called because *significavit* is an emphatical word in it." —*Blount's Law Dictionary*.

¶ Girles may mean persons of both sexes. By having them in danger is meant that they were within the control of his office.

** And was of their rede, i.e. he advised with them.

†† A stake set up before an alehouse as a sign, and which, it appears, was sometimes decorated with a garland.

scription at all events reminds one instantly of that of the elder poet. The last "is humorously drawn," says Warton, "as counteracting his profession by his example: he is libidinous and voluptuous, and his rosy countenance belies his occupation." He then adds, "that it is an indirect satire on the ecclesiastical proceedings of those times." Even before the age of the author of the 'Canterbury Tales,' the Sumpnour appears to have distinguished himself by the contrast which Warton points out, and to have brought down upon him the indignation of equally zealous but less powerful satirists. We find in Piers Ploughman's 'Vision,' the "somoners and their lemmans" marked out for especial reprobation, in his indignant censures of the conduct of those then connected with the church. And after the period of Chaucer, he enjoyed no greater amount of favour from the poets; for Milton calls him, and the whole race of such persons, with that vehemence of phrase but too familiar with him in some of his prose writings, "a hell-pestering rabble."

His affectation of law terms, picked up from the decrees and pleadings which he had overheard during his attendance in court—his display of learning, when, having "well-drunken" of the wine, he will speak nothing but the Latin which the law-terms have taught him—above all, his flights for refuge to the one parrot cry, "*Questio quid juris*," are highly humorous and amusing. Mr. Tyrerwhitt's explanation of the origin of this phrase, which the Sumpnour finds so useful when he hath "spent all his philosophy," is, "that this kind of question occurs frequently in Ralph de Hengham (a law writer and chief justice of the Court of King's

Bench, in the time of Edward I.) ; after having stated a case, he adds, ' Quid juris ? ' "—what is the law ? and then proceeds to give the answer.

Chaucer has not described the Sumpnour's dress. About the sixteenth century, the colour of the garb of ecclesiastical attendants generally, appears to have been tawny. In Shakspeare's ' Henry VI., ' the Bishop of Winchester is said to be attended by men in tawny coats ; and in other passages of dramatic authors we have the Sumpnour more particularly referred to by that mark. Mr. Steevens quotes the following passage :—" Though I was never a tawny coat, I have played the summoner's part." In the Sutherland manuscript we have an entirely different garb. There the Sumpnour wears a jacket or surcoat of blue, and pantaloons of scarlet. He has the garland on his head ; worn, we may imagine, to set off the beauty of the face beneath, which is faithfully delineated from the poet's verses ; the buckler, apparently made of a cake, by his side ; and a sealed letter or summons in his hand.

We conclude with noticing that the Friars and Sumpnours of the fourteenth century do not appear to have looked on each other with very favourable feelings. During the pilgrimage we learn that the

" noble Frere
He made alway a manner louring cheer
Upon the Sumpnour ;"

and as soon as the opportunity offers, says,

" If it like unto this company,
I will you of a Sumpnour tell a game ;
Parde, ye may well knowen by the name,
That of a Sumpnour may no good be said."

He does accordingly tell a tale which affects the Sumpnour so strongly,

“ That like an aspen-leaf he quoke for ire.”

The latter, however, takes his revenge in the story he tells in return ; and as a specimen of the broad humour and plain speaking of our forefathers in these matters, we may be excused, perhaps, for presenting a sample of the Sumpnour’s quality from the prologue to his story, in which he gives the Friar a foretaste of what is to come. He says to the company,

“ Ye have often time heard tell,
How that a Frerè ravish’d was to hell,
In spirit onès by a visioun ;
And as an angel led him up and down,
To shoven him the paines that there were,
In all the placè saw he not a Frere ;
Of other folk, he saw enough in woe.
Unto the angel spoke the Frerè tho : *
Now, sire, quod he, have Frerès such a grace
That none of them shall comen in this place ?
Yes, quod this angel, many a millioun ;
And unto Sathanas he led him down.
And now, hath Sathanas, said he, a tail
Broader than of a carrick† is the sail ;
Hold up thy tail, throu Sathanas, quod he.”

The angel is obeyed, and immediately,

“ Right so as bees out-swarming of a hive *
issue—

“ A twenty thousand Frerès on a route,†
And throughout hell they swarmed all about.”

Upon the whole, the squabbles of the Friar and the Sumpnour formed a very “ pretty quarrel,” and were, no doubt, greatly enjoyed by their fellow-travellers.

* Then. † A large ship. ‡ On a route, in a company.

THE PARDONER.

With the Sumpnour, continues the poet,

“ Rode a gentle Pardonere
Of Rounceval, his friend and his compeer,
That straight was comen from the court of Romè.
Full loud he sang, ‘ Come hither, lovè, to me :’
‘ This Sumpnour bare to him a stiff burdoún,*
Was never trump of half so great a soun’.
This Pardonere had hair as yellow as wax,
But smooth it hung, as doth a strike of flax ;
By ounces hung his lockes that he had,
And therewith he his shoulders oversprad ;
Full thin it lay, by culpons,† one and one ;
But hood, for jollity, ne wear’d he none ;
For it was trussèd up in his wallét.
Him thought he rode of all the newe get ;‡
Dishevel, save his cap, he rode all bare.
Such glaring eyen had he as a hare.
A vernicle had he sew’d upon his cap.
His wallet lay before him in his lap,
Bret-full of pardon come from Rome all hot.
A voice he had as small as hath a goat.
No beard had he, ne never none should have,
As smooth it was as it were newe shave.

* * * *

But of his craft, from Berwick unto Ware
Ne was there such another Pardonere.
For in his mail he had a pillowbere,§
Which, as he saide, was Our Lady’s veil.
He said he had a gobbet|| of the sail
‘ Thatte Saint Peter had when that he went
Upon the sea, till Jesus Christ him hent.¶

* Or, sung a base accompaniment.

† Shreds.

‡ That is to say, in the most fashionable manner.

§ The covering of a pillow.

Morsel

¶ Took hold of.

He had a cross of laton,* full of stones ;
 And in a glass he hadde pigges' bones.
 But with these relics, whenne that he found
 A poore parson dwelling up on lond ;
 Upon a day he got him more monéy
 Then that the parson got in moneths tway.
 And thus with feignèd flattering and japes †
 He made the parson and the people his apes.

But truëly to tellen at the last,
 He was in church a noble ecclesiast.
 Well could he read a lesson or a story,
 But alderbest‡ he sang an offertory ;§
 For well he wiste, when that song was sung,
 He muste preach, and well afile|| his tongue,
 To winne silver, as he right well could ;
 Therefore he sang the merrier and loud."

Such is the general description of the Pardoner in the prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales;' but in the Tales themselves we have a still more detailed picture; painted by that most amusing and impudent cheat himself, and in the richest style of humorous satire. Before we proceed any further, however, it may be as well to notice a few particulars concerning the origin and history of the "craft" of which the individual in question is so brilliant an exemplar. In the early ages of the Roman Catholic Church, contrite sinners, after confession, not unfrequently received severe and public punishment, in addition to the pains of purgatory after death to which their sin would subject them. Occasionally, however, an *indulgence* was granted by the bishops, mitigating the severity or duration of both kinds of punishment, or commuting them

* A mixed metal, somewhat resembling brass.

† Tricks.

‡ Best of all.

§ The anthem or service chanted during the offering, and forming a part of the Mass. || File, sharpen, polish.



The Pardoner.

for works of charity or pious exercise. Such was the origin of indulgences. In progress of time, indulgences were granted on a more wholesale scale; as a temptation to wealthy persons to assist in the erection of some great monastery or cathedral, or for the attainment of other important objects desired by the church. The first great abuse of this power, appears to have been produced by its too frequent use by the bishops, and by its arrogation on the part of simple priests: the result of which was a most injurious facility of obtaining remission of punishment. The early fathers of the church, St. Cyprian and Tertullian, for instance, complain of this state of things. A worse, however, was to follow. Indulgences not only were granted without reference to their original purpose, of merely commuting a specific punishment for a specific sin, and in an appropriate manner, after a consideration of all the circumstances—but they became matters of sale! And although the traffic in them had been severely reprobated by many councils, and although the very bull by which they were granted contained a clause stating that if anything were given as the price of the indulgence, the indulgence itself became null, yet it is well known that, in the words of Godwin, “the sale of indulgences, pardons, and dispensations, the occasions for which were continually multiplied, brought a boundless revenue to the court of Rome.”* By the time of Chaucer and Wycliffe, the evil had become an intolerable disgrace to the church in the eyes of all its enlightened and pious friends; consequently we find both those admirable reformers

* ‘*Life of Chaucer*,’ vol. ii., p. 114.

holding up the Pardoners, as the retailers of indulgences were called, to the scorn and contempt of their readers. The poet, in particular, has drawn their character so carefully; has detailed all the modes of imposition adopted by them with so keen a sarcasm; that there wanted but the art of printing for its dissemination, to have saved our later writers and preachers a great deal of trouble. The Pardoner thus addresses the other Pilgrims:—

“ Lordings, quod he, in churche when I preach,
 I paine me* to have a haughty speech,
 And ring it out as round as go'th a bell,
 For I can all by rotè that I tell.
 My theme is alway one, and ever was :
Radix malorum est cupiditas.†

First I pronouncè whennes† that I come ;
 And then my bulles show I all and some ;
 Our liegè lordes seal on my patént,
 'That show I first, my body to warrént ;
 'That no man be so bold, ne priest, ne clerk
 Me to disturb of Christe's holy work.

* * * * *

Then have I in latón a shoulder bone,
 Which that was of a holy Jewes sheep.
 Good men, say I, take of my wordes keep ;
 If that this bone be wash'd in any well,
 If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swell,
 'That any worm hath eat, or worm ystung,
 Take water of that well and wash his tongue,
 And it is whole anon.

* * * * *

If that the good man that the beastes oweth,§
 Will every week, ere that the cock him croweth,

* I paine me, *i.e.* I take pains.

† Cupidity is the root of all evil.

‡ Whence. § Owneth.

Fasting, ydrinken of this well a draught,
 As thilkè holy Jew our elders taught ;
 His beastes and his store shall multiply :
 And, sirs, also, it healeth jealousy.

* * * * *

Here is a mitain * eke, that ye may see :
 He that his hand will put in this mitain,
 He shall have multiplying of his grain
 When he hath sowed, be it wheat or oats ;
 So that he offer pence, or elles groats.”

The veneration for the relics of holy men, martyrs, &c., sprang up during the first ages of the Christian church ; but their use, which, it appears from Chaucer, had grown in the fourteenth century into so vulgar a superstition, and afforded such a harvest to imposture, may be dated probably from about the end of the sixth century only. At that period Gregory I. was pope, who displayed a high sense of the virtue inherent in such things. There is a letter of his to the Empress Constantina, in answer to her request for a part of the body of St. Paul, which he declines, on the ground that it was not the custom of the Romans, or in general of the Christians of the West, to touch, much less to remove, the bodies of saints ; but that they put a piece of linen, called Brandeum, near them, which is afterwards withdrawn, and treasured up with due veneration in some new church ; and as many miracles are wrought by it, as if the bodies themselves were there. In order, however, not to wholly disappoint the empress, the Pope added, he would send her some filings of the chains which St. Paul wore on his neck and hands. From that time the veneration for relics increased, till it became, as we have said, during the middle ages, a vulgar *superstition*, on which impostors thrived :—

* Mitten.

"By this gaud have I wennen year by year,
A hundred marks since I was Pardoner,"

says the rogue of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

The poet tells us he is "of Rounceval;" the chapel, we presume, built over the tomb of Roland, nephew to Charlemagne, at the well-known place in Spain where he was killed, and to which chapel there was in the middle ages great resort of pilgrims; but his most recent visit has been to Rome; and hence the token he carries in his hat—the vernicle—an ornament exhibiting a miniature copy of the picture of Christ, said to have been imprinted on a handkerchief, under the following miraculous circumstances:—"As our Saviour was carrying the cross, a maid, named Veronica, presented him with a handkerchief; with which he wiped the blood and sweat from his face, and then gave it back to her. On looking at the handkerchief, the pious and humane possessor found imprinted on it in colours a portrait of Christ; thus originated the Sudarium or holy kerchief—the Veronica—and, by corruption, the vernicle."

The Pardoner had certainly one merit—candour;—that is to say, when he was not professionally engaged. As he has told the pilgrims of his gains, so he also tells them of his mode of silencing all opposition to his trade, or at least of punishing it, by attacking the offender from the pulpit, which it appears was frequently if not generally open to him. "For," he says,—

"—when I dare no other ways debate,
Then will I sting him with my tongue smert
*In preaching, so that he shall not asterte**

* Escape.

To be defamed falsely, if that he
 Hath trespass'd to my brethren or to me
 For though I telle not his proper name,
 Men shall well knowen that it is the same,
 By signes, and by other circumstānces :
 Thus quit I folk that do us displeasances.
 Thus spit I out my venom under hue
 Of holiness, to seem holy and true.
 But shortly mine intent I will devise,
 I preach of nothing but for covetise.
 Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas."

Mr. Todd says, "However lightly the character of the Pardoner may be estimated, I must not omit to remark, that the tale which the poet occasions him to recite, (the awful story of 'Death and the Three Riotours') is extremely interesting in its dramatic and moral effect." * This observation, whether so intended or not, appears calculated to convey an erroneous impression ; namely, that there is a want of fitness between the tale and its relater, which is perhaps about the last fault that so great an artist as Chaucer would have committed. Knowing the Pardoner's character and tastes, the pilgrims cry out, immediately that he is about to commence his tale,

"Nay, let him tell us of no ribaldry.
 Tell us some moral thing, that we may learn."

To which the Pardoner replies—

"—though myself be a full vicious man,
 A moral tale yet I you tellen can,
 Which I am wont to preachen for to win ;"

* *Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer*, p. 263.

at the same time there was no "man of law throughout the universal world, which by reason of his office gained so much as one of these sergeants."* Such dinners are now discontinued, though Sergeants continue to pay a considerable sum (£350) to their Society, on entrance.

Such were the rank and importance of this member of the law, at the time the poet introduced him into the Canterbury pilgrimage.

"A Sergeant of the lawe, 'ware† and wise,
That often had ybeen at the *Parrise*,
There was also, full rich of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of great reverence :
He seemèd such, his wordes were so wise.
Justice he was full often in assize,
By patent, and by pleinc‡ commissioun.
For his sciēce, and for his high renown,
Of fees and robès had he many one.
So great a purchaser was no where none.
All was fec-simple to him in effect,
His purchasing might not be in suspect.§
No where so busy a man as he there n'as,
And yet he seemèd busier than he was.
In termes had he case and doomes all,
That from the time of King Will. weren fall.
Thereto he could indite, and make a thing
That coulde no wight pinch at|| his writing;
And every statute could he plain by rote.
He rode but homely in a medley coat,
Girt with a seint¶ of silk, with barres small."

Warton, speaking of the word *Parvis*, says that it is supposed to be derived from *Paradise*, which derivation Mr. Richardson adopts in his Dictionary. Many of our old religious houses had a place called

* Dugdale. † Wary. ‡ Pleine—full. § Suspicion.

|| *Pinch at*, lay hold of flaws in his writing.

¶ Cinct, or girdle.

the Paradise; hence, perhaps, the name came to be applied to the porticos of churches, as was the case both in the French and English languages. We find in Chaucer's translation from the 'Roman de la Rose' the following passage:—

“There was no wight in all Paris
Before Our Lady* at Parvis,
That they ne might the booke buy:”

and Warton says that in the year 1300 children were taught to read and sing in the Parvis of St. Martin's church at Norwich. The same word was also used in connexion with the schools of "Sophistry" formerly existing in Oxford, which consisted of academic exercises, principally in logic, held in the afternoon. The Parvis to which Chaucer's Sergeant-at-Law "often had ybeen," stood in the same relation to the law that the Oxford schools did to logic. "Here not only young lawyers repaired to learn, but old sergeants to teach and show their cunning."† We learn also from Fortescue, that the Courts of Law were shut after mid-day, and that the lawyers then went to meet their clients, and hold consultations at the Parvis, and elsewhere. The metropolitan parvis was the portico of St. Paul's Cathedral, where the sergeants chose their respective pillars, as the more eminent members of the Stock Exchange do in *their* place of meeting to this day: and a noisy, bustling scene St. Paul's portico must have presented at such times. In a manuscript written by one of the benchers of Middle Temple Hall, about 1660, complaint is made that the young students of the

* *Notre Dame.*

† *Waterhouse's Commentary on Fortescue.*

Temple, having no place to walk in and converse, make their church their promenade and study, and that during Term Time, by reason of the confluence of suitors, the sacred building had no more quietness in it than the Pervyse of Pawle's. The lines,

"In termes had he case and doomes all,
That from the time of King Will. weren fall,"

imply that the Sergeant was thoroughly familiar with all the cases and dooms, or decisions, which had been given from the time of the Conqueror. Chief Justice Glanvil, who lived in the reign of Henry II., appears to have been the most eminent of those early writers who reduced the feudal laws and customs into treatises, and thus laid the foundation of the system of English jurisprudence; which, it is evident from the passage before us, had not in Chaucer's time been materially affected by the introduction of the study of the Roman or civil law in the twelfth century. Chaucer says, in connexion with our Sergeant's performance of some of the humbler duties of the legal profession, that no one—

"——coude pinch at his writing:"

Was then professional subtlety and precision so very powerfully developed in the lawyers of the fourteenth century, or was it that they worked on good principles? The answer is given by Chief Justice Hale, who, speaking of the character of the rolls of judicial proceedings of the reign of Edward I., commends the clearness and perspicuity of the pleadings, of the laws upon which the pleadings proceeded, and of the judgments finally given; he especially notices the freedom of the whole from *multiplicity* of words. Would we could revive

For which when I had long advised me,
 I deemed him some Canon for to be.
 His hat hung at his back down by a lace,
 For he had ridden more than trot or pace;
 He had aye pricked like as he were wood.*
 A clote-leaf † he had laid under his hood
 For sweat, and for to keep his head from heat.
 But it was joye for to see him sweat;
 His forehead droppèd as a stillatóry ‡
 Were full of plaintain, or of paritory §;
 And when that he was come, he 'gan to cry
 God save, quod he, this jolly company."

The Canon (for such he is) explains that he has been riding fast in order to overtake the pilgrims. The Host, thinking of his favourite scheme, at once endeavours to secure another story, and inquires of the Yeoman if his master can tell a merry one. The Yeoman seems surprised at the question; that is but a trifle to what his master can do. Well, but what is he, demands the Host? "a clerk?" Nay, he is greater than that, replies the Yeoman,—

"I say, my lord can|| such a subtilty,
 (But all his craft ye may not weete of me,
 And somewhat help I yet to his working),
 That all the ground on which we be riding,
 Till that we come to Canterbury town,
 He could all cleane turnen up so down,¶
 And pave it all of silver and of gold."

This might do all very well for anybody but Harry Bailly, who has a thorough English hatred of humbug, and so begins to inquire in his own satirical fashion, why the Canon wears so bad a coat.

* Mad. † A leaf of the bur-dock. ‡ Still.

§ The herb now known as pellitory of the wall.

|| Knows, or is capable of.

¶ Or, as we should say, turn upside down.

by indirectly testing the amount of benefit the students derived from the latter, and by directly carrying forward their legal education. The Reader now sat in the open hall, accompanied by some of the utter barristers, whilst on each side two of the inner barristers or students took their places, as counsel respectively for an imaginary plaintiff and defendant. The case chosen, was of course one that involved nice points of law ; and when it had been fully stated on both sides by the more juvenile counsel, two utter barristers expressed their opinions upon the points raised, and finally the Reader, and the older benchers who sat with him, summed up. Such was the training of the bodies from which all the high legal functionaries of the realm were to be chosen. The first stage of progress in active life, for those who aimed at distinction, was in Chaucer's period that of apprentice-at-law, the barristers who bore that appellation forming the inferior class of advocates in the king's court. Above these stood the sergeants-at-law, [who were the principal advocates, and who also acted as assessors to the chief justiciar, while his office lasted. But in Chaucer's time, a great change took place in the supreme judicial establishments of the country. The office of Chief Justiciar, who had previously presided over the three divisions of the great court of the sovereign, the *Aula Regis*, was then abolished ; and the three courts of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer, each assumed a separate and independent existence. The sergeants were chosen as judges of the two former ; but the latter, being then considered merely a court for the regulation of revenue, required no *legal* superior, and was therefore generally placed under the care of some noble-

hich, however, the Yeoman, in very fulness of art, frequently returns,) he gives the pilgrims an sight into the mysteries of alchemy:—

“ When we be there, as we should exercise
 Our elvish* craft, we seemen wondrous wise :
 Our termes be so clergial† and quaint.
 I blow the fire till that mine hearte faint.
 What should I tellen each proportion
 Of thinges, which that we workén upon,
 As on five or six ounces, may well be
 Of silver, or some other quantity ?
 And busy me to tellen you the names,
 As orpiment‡, burnt bones, iron squames\$,
 That into powder grounden be full small ?
 And in an earthen pot how put is all,
 And salt yput in, and also peppere,
 Before these powders that I speak of here,
 And well ycovered with a lamp of glass ?
 And of much other thing which that there was ?
 And of the pots and glasses engluting||,
 That of the air might passen out no thing ?
 And of the easy fire, and smart also,
 Which that was made ? and of the care and woe
 That we had in our matters subliming,
 And in amalgaming, and calcining
 Of quicksilver, yclepèd mercury crude ?
 For all our sleightes we can not conclude.

* * *

There is also full many another thing
 That is unto our craft appertaining,
 Though I, by order, them not rehearsen can,
 Because that I am a lewèd¶ man ;
 Yet will I tell them, as they come to mind,
 Though I ne cannot set them in their kind ;
 As bole armeniac, verdigrease, borás,
 And sundry vessels made of earth and glass,

Mischievous. † Learned. ‡ A mineral. § Scales.
 || Luting, or coating with clay. ¶ Ignorant.

——— and our descénsores *
 Vials, crosets,† and sublimátories,
 Cucurbites,‡ and álembiks eke,
 And other such gear,⁴ dear enough a leek.⁵
 What needeth it for to rehearse them all ?
 Waters rubifying, and bulles gall,
 Arsenic, sal ammoniac, and brimstóné ;
 And herbes—could I tell—eke many one,
 As agremon', valerian, and lunáry,
 And other such, if that me list to tarry ;
 Our lampes burning bothe night and day
 To bring about our craft, if that we may ;
 Our furnace eke of calcination,
 And of watérs albification.
 Unslacked limè, chalk, and glaïre of an ey¶,
 Powders diverse, ashes, ———, ———, and clay,
 ———, sal-petre, and vitriole,
 And divers firès made of wood and coal,
 Sal tartar, alkali, and salt preparat.
 And combust' matters, and coagulate ;||
 Clay made with horse and mannes hair, and oil
 Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, and argoile.¶¶

But amidst all this confusion of the substances for
 and the means of transmutation, the Yeoman has
 obtained an inkling of the influences and powers to
 which they are subsidiary, and upon which the
 Alchemist more especially relies for success. So
 the Yeoman tells the pilgrims of "the foure
 Spirits," and "of the bodies seven :"—

* A vessel for the extraction of oil *per descensum*.

† Crucibles.

‡ Gourd-shaped vessels.

§ That is to say, dear enough for things of such small value.

|| Egg.

¶ Mr. Halliwell has shown that argoile does not mean potter's clay, as is commonly believed, but the impure salt deposited from wine. See the 'Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words,' now in course of publication.

“ The first spirit quicksilver cleped is,
 The second orpiment ; the third ywis
 Sal ammoniac, and the fourth brimstone.
 The bodies seven eke, lo ! them hear anon :
 Sol gold is, and Luna silvér we threpe*,
 Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver we clepet,
 Saturnus lead, and Jupiter is tin,
 And Venus copper, by my father kin.”

But the “ cursed craft ” only beggars all concerned. In the bitterness of his reflections, the Yeoman calls upon all those who desire to publish their folly, to come and learn the multiplying art ; all those who have aught in their coffer, to turn alchemists ; and, in so doing, there is no doubt but they will, in one way at least, wax philosophers. The constant disappointment of the chief object is, however, not the only trouble of the Yeoman ; he often gets blamed for the failure. Having explained that,

“ Ere that the pot be on the fire ydone
 Of metals with a certain quantity,
 My lord them tempereth and no man but he ; ”

he adds, but

“ full oft it falleth so,
 The pot to-breaketh, and farewell ! all is go.
 These metals be of so great violence,
 Our walles may not make them résistance,
 But if they weren wrought of lime and stone ;
 They piercen so, that through the wall they gone,
 And some of them sink down into the ground :
 Then have we lost by times many a pound.
 And some are scattered all the floor about ;
 Some leaper into the roof withouten doubt.
 Though that the fiend not in our sight him shew,
 I trow that he be with us, thilke shrew !—

* Name.

† Call.

In helle, where that he is lord and sire,
 Ne is there no more wo, rancour, ne ire.
 When that our pot is broke, as I have said,
 Every man chit,* and holt him evil apaid :†
 Some said, it was 'long on† the fire making ;
 Some said, Nay, it was 'long on the blowing ;
 (Then was I 'fear'd, for that was mine office)
 ' Straw,' quod the third, ' Ye be lewéd and nice,§
 It was not tempered as it ought to be.'
 ' Nay,' quod the fourthe, ' stint and hearken me ;
 Because our firè was not made of beech,
 This is the cause, and other none, so the iche||.
 I cannot tell whereon it was along,
 But well I wot great strife is us among.'
 ' What?' quod my lord, ' There n'is no more to done,
 Of these perils I will beware eftsoon ;
 I am right siker, that the pot was crased ¶,
 Be as be may, be ye no thing amazed.
 As usage is, let sweep the floor as swithe,**
 Pluck up your heartes, and be glad and blithe.'"

But notwithstanding all this care to amend what
 has been found amiss, notwithstanding that when
 they are together

" Every man seemeth a Solomon ;"
 they discover in the end the profound truth of the
 proverb—

" But all thing which that shineth as the gold,
 Ne is no gold."

These passages may give some idea of the ad-
 mirable and complete picture Chaucer has given
 us of the alchemists of his day, the men who—

" Wherever that they gone
 Men may them kennen by smelle of brimstone,
 For all the world they stinken as a goat."

* *Chideth*. † Treated ill. ‡ ' Long on, occasioned by.
 § *Lewed and nice*, ignorant and foolish.
 || So may I succeed. ¶ Broken. ** Quickly.

THE CLERK OF OXENFORD.*

"A clerk there was of Oxenford also,
 That unto logic hadde long ygo,†
 As leane was his horse as is a rake,
 And he was not right fat, I undertake;
 But looked hollow and thereto soberly.
 Full threadbare was his overest courtepy;‡
 For he had gotten him yet no benefice;§
 He was nought worldly to have an office.
 For him was liever have at his bed's head
 A twenty bookes cloth'd in black or red
 Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
 Than robès rich, or fiddle, or psaltry.
 But all be that he was a philosópher,
 Yet hadde he but little gold in coffer,§
 But all that he might of his friendes hent ||
 On bookes and on learning he it spent;
 And busily 'gan for the soules pray
 Of them that gave him wherewith to scholay.
 Of study took he moste care and heed.
 Not a word spake he morè than was need;
 And that was said in form and reverence,
 And short and quick, and full of high sentence;
 Sounding in moral virtue was his speech;
 And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

THIS very interesting character has much in common with the "poore parson of a town" who has engaged our attention,¶ although the poet, with true dramatic skill, has kept them perfectly dis-

* Oxford. † Gone. ‡ A short upper cloak.

§ This alludes, we presume, to the connexion between alchemy and philosophy, which was formerly so close that the two were seldom found apart. || Get hold of, obtain.

¶ They are grouped together in the illustrative engraving, p. 155.

inct from each other ; not only as examples of the respective classes to which they belong, but as real personages, having their respective individual characteristics. The same lofty feelings and principles actuate both, assuming in the one instance a deeply religious cast, and in the other an equally powerful moral and philosophical tone : both are learned men ; both poor, and both willing to remain so ; whilst the one can enjoy the society of his books, and the other advance the spiritual prosperity of his flock. Their differences are no less noticeable and instructive. The entire heart and mind of him who, apart from the sacred writings, presents the most perfect specimen of a Christian pastor that we possess, or that the imagination of man can conceive, is occupied by the care of his flock ; the clerk's morality and philosophy by no means produce an equal abnegation of self—

“ Of *study* took *he* moste care and heed : ”

the first lives wholly for others ; the second, inferior only to him, spends no inconsiderable portion of his time and energies on himself. Yet even in so doing, how utterly divested is he of any sentiment of a selfish kind ! Though the “ *poore parson's* ” philosophy may be the nobler, yet still how noble is the clerk's ! Aware of the high capacities God has implanted in him, he thinks it but his duty, as it is his pleasure, to develop them to the utmost ; and at the same time both these influences impel him to impart to his fellow-men whatever of value his studies have bequeathed to him. “ Gladly would he learn,” says Chaucer, in the exquisite concluding line of the description, “ and gladly teach.”

This noblest of scholars was not alone in his love of learning for its own sake ; or in his determination to gratify his love at any worldly cost. There must have been many such scholars, when education was in the hands of such teachers, as the Rector and Masters of the Faculty of Arts in the most distinguished of European universities, Paris ; who, in 1362, petitioned for the postponement of the hearing of a case in which they were interested, on the ground of the difficulty they experienced to find money to pay the procurators and advocates whom it was necessary to employ—they *whose profession it was to possess no wealth*. That a similar spirit prevailed in the English universities at the same time, Chaucer's character of the Clerk of Oxford may almost be considered to prove.

There are two passages of a very extraordinary kind in relation to the parson and the clerk, by Warton, which show but too clearly, how little the historian of poetry could sympathise with the highest class of poetical creations. He says of Chaucer's description of the first, that he shows in it "his good sense and good heart;" and there ends his commendation : whilst of the second, in reference to these noble lines—

" Not a word spake he more than was need ;
And that was said in form and reverence,
And short and quick, and full of high sentence,"—

he writes, "The clerk's unwearied attention to logic had tintured his conversation with much pedantic formality, and taught him to speak on all subjects in a precise and sententious style." Is not this a fair specimen of what Swift calls the "*art of sinking*" in poetry? How different—

Godwin has read the lines, may be inferred from the fact that he adduces them as one of the proofs of a very interesting theory; namely, that Chaucer, in the person of the Clerk, described his own mental characteristics. We need hardly say that Godwin, in applying these lines to the poet, did not intend to call him a formal pedant. The theory to which we have alluded, is too interesting to be passed over without examination. Chaucer, as we have before stated, is himself one of the pilgrims who are journeying towards Canterbury. As he describes all his companions—their persons, habits, minds—he could scarcely avoid, without affectation, some allusions to himself. Most happily he gets over the difficulty. After the Prioress has told her tale, the Host looks about him to see who shall tell the next, when his eye falls on Chaucer, whom he thus addresses:—

“ ————— What man art thou ? quod he ;
 Thou lookest as thou wouldest find a hare,
 For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
 Approache near, and look up merrily.
 Now, 'ware you, sirs, and let this man have place.
 He in the waist is shapen as well as I :
 This were a poppet in an arme to embrace
 For any woman, small, and fair of face.
 He seemeth elvish by his countenance,
 For unto no wight doth he dalliance.”

The poet, however, has here described his personal features only ; but in the Clerk of Oxford, we believe, and that belief is sanctioned by Godwin's high authority, he has revealed to us a most interesting glimpse of his literary habits and mind, *as well as of a very important event in his history, of which we should otherwise have been ignorant.* The love of “ Aristotle and his philosophy ” could

possibly apply more forcibly to the Clerk, than know it did to Chaucer; and of the latter's of reading, and his propensity to enjoy that in bed in his sleepless hours, when the books his bed's head" must have been found very venient, he has himself expressly and repeatedly med us. But the most striking proof of the section is, that Chaucer, as we have just stated, put into the Clerk's mouth a record of one of the interesting events of his (the poet's) life. "I tell you a tale," says the Clerk to his fellow-sims,

"————— which that I
 Learned at Padua of a worthy clerk,
 * * * * *
 Francis Petrarch, the laureate poëte."

he tale referred to, is the wonderfully pathetic of 'Grisilde,' which Petrarch translated from 'Decameron' of Boccaccio.

Now we know that in 1373 Chaucer was sent mission to Genoa, and that it was about—probably a little before—the same time, that arch made the translation; facts that, taken in section with the text, seem to us tolerably lusive as to the truth of the incident. As a further proof that the Clerk states a fact of poet's biography, Godwin remarks, "Why Chaucer choose to confess his obligation to arch rather than to Boccaccio, from whose me Petrarch confessedly translated it (and which Chaucer was familiarly acquainted)? this very natural reason—because he was eager mmemorate his interview with this venerable arch of Italian letters, and to record the plea- he had reaped from his society. Chaucer not do this more effectually than by men-

tioning his having heard from the lips of Petrarch, a tale which had been previously drawn up and delivered to the public by another."

Sir Harris Nicolas (in his new 'Life' of the poet) considers this reasoning doubtful, on the ground that it is not *certain* that Chaucer was acquainted with the original Italian of Boccaccio; that there *may* have been a common Latin original of the tales to which Boccaccio, as well as Chaucer, was indebted; and lastly, that it may be *inferred* Chaucer was not acquainted with the Italian language, since he has not introduced any Italian quotations into his works, which at the same time abound in Latin and French words and phrases. Surely, this is questioning for questioning's sake: the first two objections are mere unsupported possibilities ranged against established facts; and as to the last, since Latin and French had been for centuries much more familiar to all readers and writers in England, than their own mother-tongue (the French had indeed become a part of the mother-tongue), there was perfect propriety in introducing the words and phrases from both if he so desired, whilst he would not have been even understood in similar introductions from Italian. We should consider, also, the circumstance that Chaucer was sent on *repeated* missions to Italy, as in itself a kind of evidence that he did understand the language in question; though it seems Sir Harris Nicolas rejects such conclusions, because there are instances of ambassadors who were similarly ignorant. But were these the real men of business of the embassy, *and were they sent again and again?* It is no *light* consideration, in reviewing this and still *weightier* matters of the poet's history, to perceive *that, whilst the more ornamental personages, the*

knights, lords, &c., of some nine of the embassies dispatched to the Continent within the space of a few years, were constantly changed ; there is one man as constantly connected with the whole nine —no doubt the real diplomatic labourer—and that one is Chaucer. From Petrarch's lips, then, we are quite prepared to believe, with Godwin and the text of the ' Canterbury Tales,' did the poet hear the marvellous story ; and as his biographer observes, the magic of a tale, perhaps the most pathetic that human fancy ever conceived, heard under the sacred roof of him in whom the genius of modern poetry seemed to be concentrated, must have been altogether a surprise, a feast, a complication of sentiment and pleasure, such as it has fallen to the lot of few mortals to partake. We may conclude this part of our subject by relating an anecdote illustrative of the effect of the tale on one of its readers. About the same time that Petrarch read it to Chaucer, he showed it to one of his Italian friends, a citizen of Padua. The latter attempted to read it aloud, but he had no sooner got into the incidents of the story than he was obliged to desist ; his voice was choked by his emotions. He repeated the trial, but was quite unable to proceed.

In the Sutherland Manuscript, the Clerk's surcoat, or "overest courtepy," with the hood, is of a dirty violet colour ; his stockings, and the saddle and bridle on his "lean," miserable-looking horse, are of scarlet. He holds a book in his right hand, which is stretched out, as if he were descanting on its contents. Under his left arm he carries other books bound in red and blue. The painter *has not overlooked* the "hollow" face of the poor *but high-minded* Clerk.

SECTION V.

DOMESTIC LIFE—AGRICULTURE.

IF, in reference to the period of Chaucer, we exclude the higher aristocracy of England generally, whose occupations appear to have been, government, war, and intrigue—and the inhabitants of the towns, who lived by the cultivation of trade, commerce, and the arts handicraft and mental—the remainder, forming the great bulk of the agricultural population, may be divided into four classes: the large landed proprietors, who lived upon and looked after their estates; the smaller proprietors or freemen, who generally possessed little patrimonies of their own, or otherwise rented farms from others; the villeins-regardant, or serfs, who belonged to the soil, but under such circumstances that, in Chaucer's time, they were fast rising to the position that would cause the soil to belong to them (our original copyholders); and lastly, the villeins in gross, or personal slaves, who,—joining in the movement of the former villein class, and often becoming villeins-regardant as a transition stage towards the grand goal, that of selling their labour to whom and wherever they pleased,—were rapidly losing their distinctive character of absolute slaves, and making their rights known to those who, till now, seem not to have dreamed they ever had any. *The Wat Tyler insurrection in 1381 was but a*

phase of this movement on the part of the unenfranchised slaves, and one which must have led to deep and solemn reflection in Chaucer's mind, who had a personal as well as a public interest in the matter ; since his patron and brother-in-law, the great John of Gaunt, was one of the nobles marked out by the populace for their especial vengeance, and whose palace of the Savoy was destroyed in consequence. That insurrection was put down ; and King Richard II., faithless to all his promises, told the people who had shared in, or who would have benefited by it, that as rustics they had been and were, so in bondage they should remain ; and both he and his parliament strove by severe laws to accomplish what he had announced. But a mightier fiat than that of King, Lords, and Commons, had gone forth ; and the movement progressed irresistibly. Before Chaucer died, he must have seen that his poor countrymen were in effect already free ; and sure we are, that *he* must have rejoiced in their elevation, who knew so well what high intellect and lofty virtues were to be found among the poor—witness the poore Parson, and the threadbare-coated Clerk, of whom we have spoken ; witness the humble Ploughman, of whom we have yet to speak.

Of the four agricultural classes we have named, Chaucer furnishes us with a comprehensive group of examples. The wealthy landlords and their agents are illustrated in the Franklin, and the Reeve or Steward ; the freemen, in the Miller and the Yeoman (before described) ; and the unemancipated, or transition classes, in the Ploughman, who appears to belong, or to have belonged, to the first, but to have risen, till there is little visible difference between *his* position and that of the "gentlemen" of "*free-bore blood.*"

THE FRANKLIN.

THE name of the class to which this luxurious respectable old gentleman, this "Epicurus' owen son," belongs, is derived from the word *frank*, free; that is to say, the Franklin was one who held his lands immediately from the king, paying homage, but free from all feudal services or payments. And a person of considerable dignity and importance he must have been at and prior to the period of Chaucer. In the 'Metrical Chronicle' of Robert de Brune (thirteenth century), he is placed in very high companionship indeed: that learned monk writes, there

"Was mad an other statute, that non erle, ne baroun,
No other lord stoute, ne fraunkelyn of toun,
Till holy kirk salle gyue tenement, rent, no lond," &c.

We need not, therefore, be surprised to find Chaucer's Franklin filling the distinguished offices of sheriff and knight of the shire; still less to find that he can afford to keep what, in modern parlance, might almost be called "open house." The dress of the Franklin, according to the Duke of Sutherland's manuscript, was a surcoat of red lined with blue, with bars or stripes of fringe or lace over it. He wore a small blue hat turned up, and black boots. For the rest, let Chaucer himself speak:

"White was his beard as is the daiȝy.
Of his complexion he was sanguine;
Well lov'd he by the morrow a sop in wine.
To liven in delight was ever his wone,*
For he was Epicurus' owen son;

* Custom.

That held opinion that plain delight
 Was verily felicity parfite.
 A housholder, and that a great was he ;
 Saint Julian he was in his country.
 His bread, his ale, was alway after one ;
 A better envinèd * man was no where none.
 Withouten bak'd meat never was his house,
 Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
 It snowèd, in his house, of meat and drink,
 Of alle dainties that men could of think,
 After the sundry seasons of the year :
 So changèd he his meat and his suppér.
 Full many a fat partridge had he in mew,
 And many a bream, and many a luce † in stew.
 Woe was his cook, but if his saucè were
 Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear.
 His table dormant ‡ in his hall alway,
 Stood ready cover'd all the longe day.
 At sessions there was he lord and sire ;
 Full often time he was knight of the shire.
 An anelace, § and a gipciere, || all of silk,
 Hung at his girdle, white as morrow milk.
 A sheriff had he been, and a countour ;
 Was no where such a worthy vavasour."

Warton says the Franklin's "impatience if his sauces were not sufficiently poignant, and every article of his dinner in due form and readiness, is touched with the hand of Pope or Boileau:" we apprehend the time is coming, when it is Pope or Boileau who will be honoured, by its being said, if with truth it can be, that they touch satire with the hand of Chaucer.

Saint Julian, to whom the poet has likened the

* That is to say, a man having a better store of wine.

† Pike.

‡ Never moved, fixed.

§ A kind of knife or dagger, generally worn at the waist
 in Chaucer's time.

|| Purse.



The Franklin. "

Franklin, was a saint who enjoyed particular reputation as an admirable caterer for his votaries in the matters of good living, good lodgings, and, in short, good things of all kinds. In some of the old legends, Simon, the leper, at whose house our Saviour lodged in Bethany, is called "Julian the good herberow." In the 'Legend of Saint Julian,' a manuscript of the sixteenth century, in the Bodleian Library, occur the following as the concluding lines:—

"Therefore yet to this day they that over land wend,
 They biddeth Saint Julian anon that good herberw he
 them send ;
 And Saint Julian's Pater-noster oft sayeth also,
 For his father's soul, and his mother's, that he them
 bring thereto."

Travellers, and their lodgings, indeed, appear to have enjoyed the saint's especial protection,—to have formed the principal objects of his care ; for in the tale of Beryn he is invoked to revenge a traveller who had been treacherously used at the place where he had been staying.

The last two lines of Chaucer's description have caused his commentators much perplexity. Countour has been supposed to mean coroner, and Warton, in his 'History of Poetry,' adopts that reading, and illustrates it by remarking that it was an office "anciently executed by gentlemen of the greatest respect and property." The Chaucer MSS. all read contour or *comptour*, and this last reading appears to us to explain its meaning. Compteur is the French word for an accountant or reckoner. Robert of Gloucester, speaking of the summoning of a hundred court by the constable of Gloucester castle, says,

“ He held this hundred mid great folk and honour,
And Adam of Arderne was his chief contour.”

Chaucer's Franklin was probably, like Adam of Arderne, the “chief contour” or steward of the hundred to which he belonged, and officiated on all such great public occasions. The meaning of the word *vavasour* is also a matter of doubt. Tyrrwhitt considers it to mean the entire class of middling landlords, among whom there was “nowhere such a worthy” man as our Franklin.

Glancing for a moment at the residences of such men as the Franklin, at their domestic economy, and at their agricultural operations, we may observe that the manor-house of Chaucer's time was generally moated, had, according to its size, one or two courtyards, with gardens, fish-ponds, pigeon-houses, &c. Then there was the rabbit-warren, furnishing at once food and fur, and the woodland to supply the hearth with fuel. Of the land in the immediate vicinity, the best was of course reserved for the lord's own use, both pasture and arable; which was cultivated by his own personal servants, the lower class of villeins. The remainder was allotted out to the higher class of villeins; who rendered various services in return, as by assisting in the lord's agricultural operations, or following him to the camp when war threatened; or who paid him still more directly, by supplies for his table, or even by money. The produce of a manor was generally expended on the manor; when very abundant, some was exchanged with neighbouring lords. The persons engaged on such estates under the lord, appear to have been—the Reeve or steward, who guarded the manorial privileges, kept the principal ac-

counts both of the manor-house and the farm, and superintended the domestics; the bailiff, who had the management of all that related to the cultivation of the land; the head harvest-man, generally elected by the tenantry, who ate at the lord's table, and had a horse in the lord's stable; the plough-driver, who slept in the same building with the cattle; to whom lastly may be added a host of shepherds, ploughmen, swineherds, carters, &c., down to the lowest of all the ordinary labourers. And over these the lord, when he was such a one as Chaucer's Franklin, exercised what may be called a kind of affectionate despotism. No one upon his estate who was in health, wanted employ and ample maintenance; none who were ill, failed to receive attentions and medicine, and generous and suitable food from his lady or other members of his family. It was necessary this system should be changed; but we are now finding by painful experience that it was not necessary that *all* should be swept away; not at least till some equivalent had been found for the better part. In the nineteenth century, alas! these equivalents have yet to be discovered.

THE MILLER AND THE REEVE.

SCARCELY had the good Knight told his noble story of 'Palamon and Arcite,' and the Host expressed his delight at the manner in which his scheme had been practically carried out, before

"The Miller, that for drinking was all pale,
So that unethes * upon his horse he sat,"

* Uneasily.

began to swear rudely that he too could tell a tale, in return for the Knight's. The Host, not a little indignant at this insubordinate conduct, but like a man whom experience in such matters has taught wisdom, gently endeavours to keep him within due bounds, and to persuade him to tell his tale at the proper time. But the Miller is obdurate, so the Host testily cries out—

“Tell on a devil way,
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome;”

and the Miller begins. We shall have occasion again to return to this story; in the mean time, here is Chaucer's portrait of the relater:—

“The Miller was a stout carl for the nones;
Full big he was of brawn, and eke of bones;
That provèd well, for over all there he came.*
At wrestling he would bear away the ram.
He was short shoulder'd, broad, a thicke gnarre,†
There n'as no door that he n'ould heave off bar,
Or break it, at a running, with his head.
His beard as any sow, or fox, was red,
And thereto broad, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop ‡ right of his nose he had
A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,
Red as the bristles of a sowes ears.
His nosè-thirlès § blacke were, and wide;
A sword and buckler bare he by his side.

* Or, in other words, was the tallest, as well as biggest of the pilgrims:

† A gnarre is a hard knot in a tree; it seems here to illustrate the round, rough, and muscular character of the Miller's body.

‡ A Saxon word, signifying the top of anything.

§ The old form of the word nostrils.



The Miller.

His mouth as wide was as a furnáce,
 He was a jangler*, and a goliardeis,
 And that was most of sin, and harlotries.
 Well could he stealen corn, and tollen thrice :†
 And yet he had a thumb of gold, parde.
 A white coat and a blue hood wearèd he.
 A baggèpipe well could he blow and soun,
 And therewithal he brought us out of town."

The wrestling-matches here alluded to, and the prize generally awarded to the conqueror, are genuine old English customs. About a hundred and sixty years before the period of the composition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' we find recorded the particulars of games of this kind held at Westminster, which were attended by serious consequences. Stow, in his 'Survey of London,' says, "I read that in the year 1222, and the 6th of King Henry III., on St. James's day, the citizens of London kept games of defence and wrestling, near to the hospital of Matilda, at St. Giles in the Fields, where they got the mastery of the men in the suburbs. The bailiff of Westminster, desiring to be revenged, proclaimed a game to be at Westminster upon Lammas day, whereunto the citizens repaired." When they had played awhile, the bailiff and the men of the suburbs, armed, treacherously fell upon the unsuspecting citizens, and drove them into the city; and a formidable riot ensued, in which many houses were pulled down. The ringleaders in the riot were hanged.

The Miller, it appears, is a "goliardeis," an appellation derived, according to Tyrrwhitt, from a jovial sect, who borrowed it from Goliath, the real

* *Babbler.*

† *That is to say, cheat in his reckoning, by taking toll thrice over.*

or assumed name of a witty writer of the latter part of the twelfth century (he published several pieces in burlesque Latin rhyme); but the original source of the English word seems to be the French *goulis*, greedy, which is supported by a very pertinent passage in 'Piers Ploughman's Vision':—

"Then grieved him a Goleardeis, a glutton of words."

With respect to the allusion in the text to the "thumb of gold," Mr. Tyrrwhitt says, if it refers, "as is most possible, to the old proverb, 'Every honest miller has a thumb of gold,' the passage may mean that our Miller, notwithstanding his thefts, was an honest miller, that is, as honest as his brethren:" to ourselves it appears much more probable that the line coming, as it does, immediately after the notice of his thefts—

"And yet he had a thumb of gold, pardé,"

is neither a bit of satire directed at the Miller's own pretensions to honesty, nor at the pretensions of his brethren of the white coat generally; but refers simply to his skill, as showing how little need there was for his thefts. Mr. Yarrell says,—“It is well known that all the science and tact of a miller are directed so to regulate the machinery of his mill that the meal produced should be of the most valuable description that the operation of grinding will permit when performed under the most advantageous circumstances. His profit or his loss, even his fortune or his ruin, depends upon the exact adjustment of all the various parts of the machinery in operation. The miller's ear is constantly directed to the note made by the running stone, in its circular course over the bed-stone; the exact parallelism of their *two surfaces*, indicated by a particular sound, being

a matter of the first consequence ; and his hand is constantly placed under the meal-spout, to ascertain by actual contact the character and qualities of the meal produced. The thumb, by a particular movement, spreads the sample over the fingers : the thumb is the gauge of the value of the produce ; and hence have arisen the sayings of 'Worth a miller's thumb,' and 'An honest miller hath a golden thumb,' in reference to the amount of the profit that is the reward of his skill. By this incessant action of the miller's thumb, a peculiarity in its form is produced, which is said to resemble exactly the shape of the head of the fish constantly found in the mill-stream, and has obtained for it the name of the miller's thumb, which occurs in the comedy of 'Wit at several Weapons,' by Beaumont and Fletcher, Act v., scene 1 ; and also in Merrett's 'Pinax.' Although the improved machinery of the present time has diminished the necessity for the miller's skill in the mechanical department, the thumb is still constantly resorted to as the best test for the quality of flour."—*British Fishes*.

The spade-like beard continued till a comparatively recent period to be worn among our beard-loving ancestors.

Such is the Miller, who now interferes to tell his tale out of due course ; and having obtained permission, precisely because it was useless to refuse it, he begins, "Now harkeneth" all and some :—

"But first I make a protestatioun
That I am drunk, I know it by my soun ;
And therefore if that I mispeak or say,
Write it the ale of Southwark, I you pray."

With this very prudent warning he continues—

“ For I will tell a legend and a life
Both of a carpenter and of his wife,” &c.

when he is himself interrupted by the Reeve; and for a reason which the description in the prologue will make apparent :—

“ The Reeve was a slender cholerick man ;
His beard was shav'd as nigh as ever he can ;
His hair was by his eares round yshorn ;
His top was docked like a priest before.
Full longe were his legges, and full lean.
Ylike a staff, there was no calf yseen.
Well could he keep a garner and a bin.
There was no auditor could on him win.
Well wist he by the drought, and by the rain,
The yielding of his seed and of his grain.
His lordes sheep, his neat*, and his dairý,
His swine, his horse, his store, and his poultry,
Were wholly in this Reeve's governing ;
And by his covenant gave he reckoning,
Since that his lord was twenty year of age :
There could no man bring him in arrearage.
There n'as bailiff, ne herd†, ne other hine‡,
That he ne knew his sleight, and his covine§ :
They were a-dread|| of him, as of the death.
His wonning¶ was full fair upon a heath,
With greene trees yshadowed was his place.
He coulde better than his lord purcháse.
Full rich he was ystored privily ;
His lord well could he pleasen subtilly,
To give, and lean** him of his owen good,
And have a thank, and get a coat and hood.
In youth he learned had a good mistere,††
He was a well good wright, a carpenter.

* Neat cattle.

† Herdsman.

‡ Hind.

§ His secret contrivances or tricks.

|| Afraid.

¶ Dwelling.

** Incline, or bend him to his (the Reeve's) own good or purposes.

†† Mystery or trade.

This Reeve sat upon a right good stot*,
 That was all pomelee† gray, and highte Scot.
 A long surcoat of perse† upon he had;
 And by his side he bare a rusty blade.
 Of Norfolk was this Reeve, of which I tell,
 Beside a town, men clepen Baldeswell.
 Tucked he was, as is a frere, about,
 And ever he rode the hinderest of the rout."

The Miller's remark, however, soon brings him forward. The cautious, calculating, reserved Reeve, stung by the anticipated ridicule of the class to which he had once belonged, forgets alike his reserve, his schemes, and his caution, and amidst the ill-suppressed mirth of the pilgrims, calls out,—

"Stint thy clappe,
 Let be thy lewèd drunken harlotry." &c.

But he has a man to deal with, whom nothing can move from his purpose, and who is still less likely to "stint" when he sees so much matter for malicious enjoyment before him. The tale he tells is one of Chaucer's richest and broadest, and the laugh at its conclusion is loud and long. The Reeve alone looks gloomy,—

"A little ire is in his heart yleft."

But says he,—

—— "Full well could I him quit,
 With blearing of a proude miller's eye,
 If that me list to speak of ribaldry.

* In the North this word is still used, but in connection with a bullock only. In Sir David Lyndsay, as well as in Chaucer, we find it applied to a horse. There is little doubt the word came from beyond the border, for in the next line we see the animal is "highte Scot."

† Dappled.

‡ Light-blue.

But I am old ; me list not play for age ;
 Grass time is done, my fodder is now forage*:
 This whitè top writeth mine olde years,
 Mine heart is also moulded as mine hairs."

In a similar strain he continues for some time to pour forth his reflections, (one very fine line we must not pass unnoticed,—

" We hop alway, while that the world will pipe"),—

till the Host, who has a mortal dislike of "sermoning," calls out,—

" What amounteth all this wit ?

* * * *

Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time.
 Lo! Depèford†, and it is half way prime ;
 Lo! Greenèwich, there many a shrew is in ;
 It were all time thy talè to begin."

Thus admonished, the Reeve commences a story, which certainly does not spare, by reflection, the Miller, or fail to requite him in his own coin.

In the Sutherland manuscript, "the Reeve" presents us with an admirable portraiture of Chaucer's pilgrim. He is evidently as choleric as he is thin. He is represented closely shaved, his hair rounded about the ears like the "crop-ears" of a later time, and docked at the top like a priest.

* "Fodder being a general name for meat given to cattle in winter, and of affinity with food applied to man and beasts, doth only signify meat. And so the sense is, my meat is forage, that is, my meat is such hard and old provision as is made for horses and cattle in winter."—*F. Thynne's Animadversions.*

† The spelling here is a proof, if any were needed, of the origin of the name Deptford—the deepe-ford.

This Reeve sat upon a right good stot*,
 That was all pomeleef gray, and highte Scot.
 A long surcoat of persef upon he had;
 And by his side he bare a rusty blade.
 Of Norfolk was this Reeve, of which I tell,
 Beside a town, men clepen Baldeswell.
 Tucked he was, as is a frere, about,
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The Reeve.

He wears a blue garment, scarlet hood, and scarlet stockings; also a sword of enormous size. Warton's observations on this character are so just, apposite, and complete, that we cannot better conclude than by transcribing them:—"He was an officer of much greater trust and authority during the feudal times than at present. His attention to the care and custody of the manors, the produce of which was then kept in hand for furnishing his lord's table, perpetually employs his time, preys upon his thoughts, and makes him lean and choleric. He is the terror of bailiffs and hinds, and is remarkable for his circumspection, vigilance, and subtlety. He is never in arrears, and no auditor is able to over-reach or detect him in accounts; yet he makes more commodious purchases for himself than for his master, without forfeiting the good will or bounty of the latter. Amidst these strokes of satire, Chaucer's genius for descriptive painting breaks forth in the simple and beautiful description of the Reeve's rural habitation,—

" 'He had his wonning fair upon a heath;
With greenè trees yshadowèd was his place.' "

THE PLOUGHMAN.

THIS industrious, simple-hearted, charitable, and good man occupies but a small space in the text; the description is, like himself, humble and unobtrusive. The most interesting feature of his personal history is his connection with the "poore Parson," as that of his moral character is the benefit he appears to have thence derived. He is in spirit, as well as in blood, *the Parson's*

This Reeve sat upon a right good stot*,
 That was all pomeleef† gray, and highte Scot.
 A long surcoat of persef upon he had;
 And by his side he bare a rusty blade.
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"Stint thy clappe,
 Let be thy lewèd drunken harlotry." &c.

But he has a man to deal with, whom nothing can move from his purpose, and who is still less likely to "stint" when he sees so much matter for malicious enjoyment before him. The tale he tells is one of Chaucer's richest and broadest, and the laugh at its conclusion is loud and long. The Reeve alone looks gloomy,—

"A little ire is in his heart yleft."

But says he,—

—— "Full well could I him quit,
 With blearing of a proude miller's eye,
 If that me list to speak of ribaldry.

* In the North this word is still used, but in connection with a bullock only. In Sir David Lyndsay, as well as in Chaucer, we find it applied to a horse. There is little doubt the word came from beyond the border, for in the next line we see the animal is "highte Scot."

† Dappled.

‡ Light-blue.

But I am old ; me list not play for age ;
 Grass time is done, my fodder is now forage * :
 This whitè top writeth mine olde years,
 Mine heart is also moulded as mine hairs."

In a similar strain he continues for some time to pour forth his reflections, (one very fine line we must not pass unnoticed,—

" We hop alway, while that the world will pipe"),—

till the Host, who has a mortal dislike of "sermoning," calls out,—

" What amounteth all this wit ?

* * * *

Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time.
 Lo ! Depèford†, and it is half way prime ;
 Lo ! Greenèwich, there many a shrew is in ;
 It were all time thy talè to begin."

" Thus admonished, the Reeve commences a story, which certainly does not spare, by reflection, the Miller, or fail to requite him in his own coin.

In the Sutherland manuscript, "the Reeve" presents us with an admirable portraiture of Chaucer's pilgrim. He is evidently as choleric as he is thin. He is represented closely shaved, his hair rounded about the ears like the "crop-ears" of a later time, and docked at the top like a priest.

* " Fodder being a general name for meat given to cattle in winter, and of affinity with food applied to man and beasts, doth only signify meat. And so the sense is, my meat is forage, that is, my meat is such hard and old provision as is made for horses and cattle in winter."—*F. Thynne's Animadversions.*

† The spelling here is a proof, if any were needed, of the origin of the name Deptford—the deepe-ford.

six of them were required for the purpose, and, after all, scarce half an acre was turned up as the result of a day's work. Such were some of the difficulties of husbandry in the olden time; and to these circumstances we probably owe not only the simplicity, but the little prominence given by Chaucer to his Ploughman.

We have already given Stow's explanation of the meaning of the word Tabard (page 18). Mr. Cowden Clarke* says, "Chaucer has dressed his Ploughman in a tabard, evidently to convey the notion that it was a cast-off dress that had been given to him." We doubt this. Chaucer was in the habit of going straightforward to his object, and saying at once that which he wished to be understood. And what is there about the Ploughman to suppose he needed or would wear such a gift? No:—"this eternal blazon *would* not be." Stow says the tabard was once worn of "noblemen and others;" and, probably, there was a garment of a similar shape, without all the finery, but known by the same name, in use among the people; perhaps, after all, our old and valued acquaintance, the smock-frock.

* We avail ourselves of this opportunity of acknowledging that we have derived considerable assistance, though for the most part of an indirect kind, from Mr. Clarke's 'Riches of Chaucer.' In the business of accentuation, for instance, we have often found it useful to compare our own reading of a line with Mr. Clarke's. That gentleman was the first who undertook the "labour of love" of endeavouring to unseal the poet's pages for the use of a wide class of readers.

SECTION VI.

DOMESTIC LIFE: TRADE AND COMMERCE.

THE MERCHANT.

As the increase of towns, and the progress of commerce, were the immediate causes of that great event which so peculiarly distinguishes the thirteenth century—the rise of the Commons, or people of England, into political power; so that very power of course naturally re-acted upon the influences which had developed it: under its watchful care, commerce became less restricted by unnatural laws, charters for self-government were obtained, and powerful associations formed; to which the monarchs of the time could not refuse their sanction, although perhaps not altogether unaware of the bulwarks they were assisting to raise against their own arbitrary encroachments. So rapid, consequently, was the progress of the principal towns of England after the first shock of the Conquest had passed away, that within about three centuries of that period, our principal merchants rivalled in wealth and splendour, and in ostentatious but still genuine hospitality, the ancient barons of the country, to whose rank, indeed, their descendants sometimes successfully aspired. What with the wars, and what with the immense bands of retainers always *attached to the feudal estates*, the value of the latter

him fifty marks ; but Henry being very skilful in that art, altering his hand, did after win of the same king the same fifty marks and fifty marks more ; which, when the same king began to take in ill part, although he dissembled the same, Henry said unto him, ‘ My lord and king, be not aggrieved ; I covet not your gold, but your play ; for I have not bid you hither that I might grieve you, but that, amongst other things, I might try your play ; ’ and (then) gave him his money again, plentifully bestowing of his own amongst the retinue : besides he gave many rich gifts to the king and other nobles and knights which dined with him.” There was also Sir William Walworth, who struck down Wat Tyler at the head of his men—an act which, however it may be questioned for its morality, was perhaps as daring an act as was ever committed. Lastly, there was the famous Sir Richard Whittington, who must have expended so vast a fortune in his charities, that we need not wonder the popular mind called in the aid of romance to explain the mode of its accumulation. Beside the erection and endowment of the magnificent almshouses, still existing ; he rebuilt, at his own expense, the gaol of Newgate, the library of the Grey Friars, the hospital of Little St. Bartholomew, and a college near St. Paul’s, called after his own name. These men were all merchants, and contemporaries of the great poet !

With this introduction, explanatory of the rank and position of the merchants generally of Chaucer’s period, we introduce his individual portrait :—

“ A Merchant was there, with a forkèd beard ;
In mottèly, and high on horse he sat ;
And on his head a Flandrish beaver hat.

His bootes claspèd fair and fetisly.*
 His reasons spake he full solemnly;
 Sounding alway th' increáse of his winning;
 He would the sea were kept† for anything
 Betwixen Middleburgh and Orèwell.
 Well could he in exchanges shieldè§ sell.
 This worthy man full well his wit beset,§
 There wiste no wight that he was in debt;
 So stedfastly did he his governance,
 With his bargains, and with his chevisance.||
 Forsooth he was a worthy man withal."

The "mottèly" dress is explained by the manuscript so often referred to; where we find the merchant habited in a garment of a bright red colour, lined with blue, and figured with white and blue flowers; most probably the dress or livery of the company to which he belonged. In a beautifully illuminated initial letter of the charter granted by Henry VI., in 1444, to the Leather-sellers' Company, is a coloured representation of the king handing the parchment scroll to some of the members, whose dress is of the same colours, red and blue, as that of the merchant in the manuscript. The incorporation of these great civic companies was, as we have before incidentally stated, a striking feature of the fourteenth century. Many of them had long existed previously as guilds and fraternities; but now they were remodelled, and obtained much more extensive powers of administering the affairs of their respective crafts. The goldsmiths, for instance, obtained the right of assaying me-

* Featly, or neatly. † Guarded.

‡ French crowns, having on one side a shield.

§ Employed.

|| "The meaning of the passage is—so steadily did he order his bargains and agreements in borrowing money."—*Mr. C. Clarke.*

of their fearful plundering expeditions into the interior of the country : Ipswich was pillaged no less than three times by them between the years 991 and 1000. And, lastly, to come nearer to our own times, and to recollections of a more pleasant nature, along the banks of this river, Gainsborough was accustomed to stray, and familiarize himself with those beautiful forms of rustic and landscape scenery, which he afterwards so beautifully reproduced for the enjoyment of his admiring countrymen.

As to the other principal features of the merchant's portrait, as it exists in the illuminated manuscript,—“ His bootès clasped fair and fetisly” are carefully shown ; and look, as Shakspeare has expressed it, “ very smooth, like unto the sign of the leg.” His steed is on the gallop ; and he wears spurs with enormous rowels—a fashionable trait of the times, we presume. He looks in the prime of life ; and his countenance is strikingly expressive of the man of business, who is

“ Sounding alway th' increáse of his winning.”

The pilgrims generally seem to have been unfortunate in their wives, or else take great liberties with truth, as well as with their absent partners' characters. Thus the Merchant, at the conclusion of the story of Grisilde, struck by the contrast that it suggests to him, breaks out thus :

“ Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow,
I have enough, on even, and on morrow,”

and adds, in explanation,

“I have a wife, the worste that may be ;
 For though the fiend to her ycouplèd were,
 She would him overmatch, I dare well swear.”

ut perhaps, after all, the subject was a standing
 ke in Chaucer's time as in our own ; and enjoyed
 ith the more zest in proportion as men felt
 themselves the more free from the despotism of
 the fireside.

THE SHIPMAN.

“ A SHIPMAN was there, wonèd * far by west,
 For aught I wote he was of Dartemouthe.
 He rode upon a rouncie,† as he couthe ;‡
 All in a gown of falding§ to the knee.
 A dagger hanging by a lace had he
 About his neck, under his arm adown.
 The hot summér had made his hue all brown.
 And certainly he was a good felláw ;
 Full many a draught of wine he hadde draw
 From Bourdeaux ward, while that the chapman sleep :
 Of nicè conscience took he no keep.
 If that he fought, and had the higher hand,
 By water he sent them home to every land.
 But of his craft, to reckon well his tides,
 His streamèr and his strandèr him besides,
 His herberow,|| his moon, and his lóde-manage,¶
 There was none such from Hull unto Cartháge.

* (Who) lived. † A common hackney horse.

‡ That is to say, as well as he was able.

§ A kind of coarse cloth. || Harbourage.

¶ Even so late as the reign of George III. we find this
 word in use in the sense in which Chaucer applies it, namely,
 pilotage. See the stat. 3 Geo. III. c. 13. From the same idea,
 that of *leading*, the north star is called the lode-star, and the
 magnet the loadstone.



The Shipman.

Hardy he was, and wise, I undertake ;
With many a tempest had his beard been shake.
He knew well all the havens, as they were,
From Gothland to the Cape de Finisterre ;
And every creek in Bretagne and in Spain :
His barge yclepèd was the Magdalin."

Commerce, about and a little prior to the period of Chaucer, made so great an advance, that the Shipman was doubtless an important, and, considering the dangers of his avocation and the variety of adventures he was constantly meeting with, a very interesting character. The magnet only became known in Europe towards the end of the twelfth century ; and did not, it is supposed, get into familiar use before the middle of the thirteenth. Chaucer, indeed, and his Scottish contemporary Barbour, are the first British writers who notice it. From the description, we perceive some of the channels in which the commerce of the fourteenth century flowed. English vessels passed to and fro between our country and France, Spain, and the places along the coast from "Gothland to Finisterre;" and, among the ports, Hull and Bourdeaux are particularly mentioned. A peculiarity of the mercantile navy at this period was its being frequently employed in warlike expeditions ; and to that circumstance we owe the preservation of many particulars as to its extent. When Henry III., in 1253, ordered all the vessels in England to be seized and employed against the rebel barons in Gascony, their number, according to Matthew Paris, was above a thousand, of which three hundred were large ships. When Edward III. was besieging Calais, he had *with him* 710 vessels belonging to English ports,

with crews to the number of 14,151 persons. It may be interesting to see the relative proportion of the men and ships furnished by the different places in England, as it may be taken as a tolerably exact criterion of their relative maritime importance. London sent 25 ships with 662 men; Margate, 15 with 160; Sandwich, 22 with 504; Dover, 16 with 336; Winchelsea, 21 with 596; Weymouth, 20 with 264; Newcastle, 17 with 414; Hull, 16 with 466; Grimsby, 11 with 171; Exmouth, 10 with 193; Dartmouth, 31 with 757; Plymouth, 26 with 603; Looe, 20 with 325; Fowey, 47 with 170; Bristol, 24 with 608; Shoreham, 20 with 329; Southampton, 21 with 572; Lyme, 16 with 482; Yarmouth, 43 with 1095; Gosport, 13 with 403; Harwich, 14 with 283; Ipswich, 12 with 239; and Boston, 17 with 361. In the whole, there are scarcely twenty men to a ship, so that the vessels generally must have been small. Later in the same century, and during Chaucer's life-time, (in 1360,) Edward issued a similar order to that before mentioned, for arresting all the vessels in his dominions; the largest were now directed to carry forty mariners, forty armed men, and sixty archers. Such a ship must have been of very respectable dimensions for its more peaceful and legitimate avocation. Of the kind of articles which formed the staple commodities of commerce during the period of the poet, we have a sufficiently exact account in the Records of the Exchequer for the year 1354, the oldest document we possess of the kind. From them it appears that the exports of *that year* were—31,651½ sacks of wool, at 6*l.* per sack; 3036 cwt. of wool, at 40*s.* per cwt.; 65 *woolfels*, at a total value of 2*l.* 8*d.*; hides to the

value of 89*l.* 5*s.* ; 4774½ pieces of cloth, at 40*s.* each (of the same kind as the Shipman's "falding," perhaps); and 8061½ pieces of worsted stuff, at 16*s.* 8*d.* each: total value of the exports, 212,338*l.* 5*s.*, paying customs to the amount of 81,846*l.* 12*s.* 2*d.* From these figures it appears that wool constituted about thirteen-fourteenths of the entire exports of England. The imports consisted of 1831 pieces of fine cloth, at 6*l.* each; 397½ cwt. of wax, at 40*s.* per cwt.; 1829½ tuns of wine, at 40*s.* per tun; and linens, mercery, grocery, &c. to the value of 22,943*l.* 6*s.* 10*d.*: making a total value of 38,383*l.* 16*s.* 10*d.* The wines here referred to, and which appear to have formed the chief commodity with which our shipman was concerned, were those of France, Spain, Greece, and Syria.

For aught he knows, says the poet, the shipman was of Dartmouth; a glance at the comparative importance of Dartmouth among the chief maritime places of England, as shown above, will explain this remark. Dartmouth contributed a more important total of ships and men than any other place in England, with the exception of Yarmouth. It was, no doubt, looked on through the country as peculiarly the seaman's home. Shipmen and Dartmouth, were ideas probably as familiar to our countrymen in Chaucer's time, as sailors and Portsmouth now. This rank Dartmouth may have owed to the convenience of its harbour, which can still accommodate 500 ships. As to Bourdeaux, where the Shipman has been accustomed to leave such a very equivocal reputation behind him, we may observe that it then belonged to the English, and that wine is still the staple export of the city. *The touches of character by which Chaucer so*

happily marks all his creations are not wanting here ;—the Shipman's riding as well as he could, and of course succeeding as well as your true seaman is generally accustomed to succeed on horseback ;—the brown hue, and the beard that has been shaken by many a tempest,—all show how accurately Chaucer drew from the life—how he must ever have founded the characters he described on those alone that he saw. And is not the Shipman of Chaucer the true sailor of our day ? In every thing the same ; even in generosity to the defeated enemy ? Chaucer observes,

“ If that he fought, and had the higher hand,
By water he sent them home to every land.”

By which we understand, that in his privateering exploits, when he had taken vessels belonging to foreign countries, he dismissed them to their homes in safety, but no doubt emptied of every thing save the mere necessities for the voyage. Mr. Cowden Clarke supposes that Chaucer means that the Shipman—the good fellow—*drowned* all his prisoners, and that that was his way of sending them home to every land !

THE HABERDASHER, ETC.

IN this group of portraits, Chaucer has not attempted to give us any individuality ; none knew better than himself, that in describing one of these “ warm comfortable men,” he described *all* ; whilst by massing them, he brought out still *more strongly* the chief and common feature—their wealth.



The Haberdasher.

" A Haberdasher and a Carpenter,
 A Webbe,* a Dyer, and a Tapiser,†
 Were all yclothèd in one livery,
 Of a solemn and great fraternity.
 Full fresh and new their gear ypickèd ‡ was.
 Their knivès were ychapèd § not with brass,
 But all with silver wrought, full clean and well ;—
 Their girdles and their pouches every del. ||
 Well seemèd each of them a fair burgéss
 To sitten in a guilddhall, on the dais ;
 Everich, for the wisdom that he can,
 Was shapely for to be an alderman.
 For cattle hadden they enough, and rent ;
 And eke their wivès would it well assent ;
 And elles certainly they were to blame :
 It is full fair to be yclep'd Madáme ;
 And for to go to vigils ¶ all before,
 And have a mantle royally ybore."

The old Saxon custom of frank pledge, is supposed to have been the germ of the guilds or companies ; which, with the progress of trade and commerce, were developed into associations of great power and influence ; at once aiding to preserve whatever freedom and prosperity might have been already acquired by the inhabitants of our towns, and enabling them to go steadily on enhancing both, till what is now the mightiest power in the state was fairly established, namely, the power of the middle classes. In London, the oldest of these companies was that to which Chaucer's Webbe belongs, the Weavers ; and an admirable foundation they began upon, if, according to their motto, they sought to " weave truth with trust."

We possess a record in connection with them

* Weaver. † Maker of tapestry. ‡ Picked ; spruce.
 § Furnished ; mounted. || Every del, every part, or every
bit. ¶ The eves of festivals : see page 245.

which is interesting in several points of view. We allude to the particulars of a case brought before the Justices Itinerant sitting at the Tower of London, in the reign of Edward II. On this occasion, "the weavers were required to show, by what authority they at this time claimed to have their guild in the city, and by virtue of the same guild to have yearly the right of electing from amongst themselves bailiffs and ministers; and the same so elected to take and swear in faithfully to execute their offices before the mayor of London? By what right also they claimed to hold their courts from week to week of all that pertained to their guild; and that none should intermeddle with their ministers in London, Southwark, or the parts adjacent, unless by their own permission, or that it were done by one of the guild; and that persons of the same guild should not be impleaded by others of matters concerning the mystery, except in the courts of the guild, or be elsewhere accused and answered? Why none might have working implements in their possession, unless the same were testified to be good and honest; and that all of the mystery should be forced to contribute to the king's ferme? Why no stranger was to be admitted as a manufacturer amongst them, without producing letters testimonial of good conduct, and the reasons of his coming? Why the working implements of such of the mystery as were in arrears of their fermes, might be distrained by the bailiffs of the guild? It was further demanded, why, if any one manufactured *cloth of Candlewick Street*, he ought to be overlooked by the bailiffs of the guild; whether or not his work was bad, and to the



The Carpenter, the Webbe or Weaver, the Dyer, and the Tapicer & Tapestry Maker.

damage of the people; and if so, that it should be proved before the mayor of London, and the offender fined in half a mark; and moreover, that such workmen should be brought before the bailiffs of the guild, according to the Constitutions; and whatever cloth or piece of cloth should be found to be of Spanish mixed with English wool, contrary to proper usage, might be adjudged to be burnt? Why those of the guild might sell without control in London all things belonging to the mystery? And, lastly, why none were allowed to work between Christmas and the Purification, or at night by candle-light; or at other times proscribed?"* The weavers pleaded in answer a charter of Edward I., in which were recited charters of Henry I. and Henry II.; but the jury decided in a great measure against them, with regard to the privileges claimed; and declared that the business was managed by the weavers "to their own profit, and the common hurt of the people."

Whilst the Weavers' Company, however, was the oldest, that of the Haberdashers appears to have been in Chaucer's time the most important of all the metropolitan trades associations. The haberdashers were originally a branch of the mercers; and dealt, like them, in small wares. Lydgate, in his well-known ballad of 'Lykpenny's Adventures in London,' places their stalls in the 'Mercery,' at Cheap. About the time of Chaucer, they divided into two fraternities, dedicated respectively to St. Catherine and St. Nicholas; one branch consisting of the hatters or hurriers; and the other of the dealers in miscellaneous articles, who were also called milliners, from their importing Milan goods for sale, such as

* Herbert's Livery Companies

brooches, aiglets, spurs, glasses, &c. Pins formed an important article of the haberdashery trade at this period, having not long superseded the points or skewers made of thorns, by which ladies were previously obliged to fasten their garments.

The other trades referred to by Chaucer need but slight comment. The tools of a carpenter at Colchester consisted merely of a broad axe, value five pence; another axe, three pence; an adze, two pence; a square, one penny; a navegor (probably a spokeshave), one penny: making the total value of his implements, one shilling. A carpenter of the present day, would be puzzled to perform all the variety of operations required of him with such tools only: *his* chest is a somewhat expensive affair. The Dyers' Company was one that possessed the privilege of keeping swans on the Thames. Some idea of the respective standing of these companies as compared with each other, and with the remainder of the civic bodies, is afforded by an examination of the state of the municipal representation, about the time that Chaucer wrote. The number of companies then sending members to the common council of London, was 48; among which, the grocers, mercers, drapers, fishmongers, goldsmiths, and vintners, were entitled to send six members each; the haberdashers and hurriers, saddlers, weavers, tapisers or tapestry makers, and barbers, four each; the joiners or carpenters, two; whilst the dyers' company sent none. The twelve great companies had not then attained their pre-eminence.

There were many picturesque features connected with civic life, and the class of men from whom Chaucer has selected his haberdasher and other tradesmen, which we should be

glad to dwell upon; did our space permit; such as the internal organization of the companies; and the peculiarities of their government under the control of the Masters and Wardens, as the chief officers were called—who had the management of all matters relating to the binding of apprentices, admission of freemen, preservation of the rights and privileges of the craft, detecting frauds and fraudulent members in connection with their respective arts and mysteries, making sumptuary laws, and admonishing or even punishing those who came shabbily dressed to the hall, arranging the elections for the common council, organizing the company's military resources, and lastly, taxing the company when they could not resist the sovereign's mandate to send him a certain sum of money, or summoning up all their heroism for resistance, when all parties were determined to decline the honour conferred upon them, of relieving the necessities of the crown. The election of the officers, who had such onerous duties to perform, was a solemn and magnificent business, with most if not all of the companies; and took place on different days for the different fraternities. Each went then in the morning to the church of its favourite saint; the whole of the members, male and female, habited in their rich and picturesque costumes, accompanied by hosts of clerks and priests, in their copes and surplices, singing; and by the entire official body of the corporation (the mayor and aldermen conspicuous by their glowing scarlet robes), whilst, scattered all over the line of procession, appeared tall waxen tapers blazing away from amidst their "costly garnishments." Afterwards they proceeded in the same state to the *hall of the company*; where one of the most luxu-

rious dinners that art could devise, epicureanism enjoy, and wealth pay for, was prepared, and at once discussed, as is the English wont, before proceeding to business. Dinner over, the master and wardens going out of office, entered with garlands on their heads, preceded by minstrels playing; and after a little pretty coquetry as to whose heads among the assistants of the company those same garlands would fit, it was always found that the very men previously determined upon were the right ones. The new officers then took the oaths. A cup was brought in with great ceremony, from which the old officers drank to the health of the new; who, donning the garland, were enthusiastically welcomed by the whole fraternity, as its proper governors and guardians for the ensuing year.

We learn from the poet, that the aldermanic rank was the great object of aspiration with London's fair citizens. The qualifications required for persons elected as aldermen were, a certain number of cattle, and a certain amount of rent. According to Stow, it was necessary also that the person proposed for alderman should be without deformity in body, wise and discreet in mind, wealthy, honourable, faithful, free, and of no base or servile condition; that no disgrace which might happen to him on account of his birth, might thence redound on the rest of the aldermen or the whole city. There seems indeed every reason to suppose, that the title and person of an alderman, were as yet looked upon with high respect, and that its old baronial dignity was far from being forgotten. Thus, about 1350, Stow *says the ancient and honourable custom with regard to the burial of aldermen was still observed; and he gives a case in point:—*"In the church where

an alderman was to be buried, one armed with his arms, bearing in his hand a standard on a horse with trappings, carried aloft his shield, helmet, and his other arms with the standard, as the manner yet is of burying the lord barons."

It appears from the text that aldermen's wives were honoured with the title of Madame; and that they took precedence in attending vigils, and of course on other public occasions. Speght observes, "It was the manner in times past, upon festival eves, called vigils, for parishioners to meet in their church-houses, and there to have a drinking fit for the time. There they used to end many quarrels between neighbour and neighbour; hither came the wives in comely manner; and they which were of the better sort, had their mantles carried with them, as well for show, as to keep them from cold at the tables. These mantles also many did use in the church, at morrow-masses, and other times."

THE PRENTICE.

"A Prentice whilom dwelt in our city,
And of a craft of Victuallers was he.
Gaillard * he was, as goldfinch in the shaw†;
Brown as a berry, a proper short fellaw;
With lockes black, combed full fetisly
Dancen he could so well and jolily
That he was cleped Perkin Revelour.
He was as full of love and paramour,
As is the hive full of honey sweet:
Well was the wenche with him mighte meet.
At every bridal would he sing and hop;
He loved bet' the tavern than the shop;

* Brisk.

† Grove.

For when there any riding was in Cheap,
 Out of the shoppe thither would he leap;
 And till that he had all the sight yseen,
 And dancèd well, he would not come again.
 And gath' red him a meinie * of his sort,
 To hop and sing, and maken such disport;
 And there they setten steven † for to meet,
 To playen at the dice in such a street.
 For in the town ne was there no prentice
 That fairer coulede cast a pair of dice,
 Than Perkin could; and thereto he was free
 Of his dispençe, in place of privity; ‡
 That found his master well in his chaffare, §
 For often time he found his box full bare."

We may take it for granted, that the Cook has been too severe in this description of one of ancient London's bold prentices—perhaps through having in his own shop a particularly bad specimen. It is certain that the far-famed integrity of our chief men of trade must have been based generally upon their training; which, however unable to prevent habits of independent thinking and acting, or even of occasional outbreaks of riot and licentiousness, must have sufficed to induce those principles of pecuniary rectitude, which were and are indispensable to commercial success. Stow says, no one was made apprentice, or at least admitted into the liberty of the city, unless he were known to be of a gentleman-like condition; or if, after he had been made free, it came "to be shown that he was of servile condition, for that very thing he lost the freedom of the city." About the period

* *Company*, apparently.

† Made an appointment.

‡ In private, where his expenditure would not be noticed.

§ Merchandise.

when Chaucer is supposed to have been writing the 'Canterbury Tales' (1386), it was ordered that in the taking of apprentices, and also in the admission of freemen, that ancient custom should be observed thenceforward.

All matters relating to the determination of quarrels between master and apprentice, and the redress or punishment these quarrels frequently involved, were under the cognizance of the officers of the respective companies. Here is an illustration of the working of the system when it was desired to punish just such a prentice as that Chaucer describes; one who had been caught in some *faux pas* connected with "love and paramour;" and who, like Chaucer's, was too formidable to be dealt with in any but a very careful manner. Two frocks were made, like those commonly worn by porters, and two hoods to match each, covering the whole face and head, with the exception of the eyes and mouth. The next court-day, two "tall men" put on the frocks and hoods; and lay quiet, while the unsuspecting John Rolls was called into the parlour of the company's court-room; immediately after, came in the mysterious personages in the hoods and frocks, with two pennyworth of birchen rods in their hands; and there, in the presence of the master and wardens, "withouten any words speaking, they pulled off the doublet and shirt of the said John Rolls, and there upon him (being naked) they spent all the said rods, for his said unthrifty demeanour."

THE COOK.

THE next character that we shall introduce to our readers is the Cook ; and that he may be received with due respect, we prefix a few notices illustrative of his social importance in this country from a very early period. These notices must be necessarily indirect, as referring rather to his vocation than to him. Of the Cook, history says little ; of the banquets set forth by his skill before the highest and mightiest of the land, and on the most interesting and eventful occasions, it furnishes, on the contrary, many particulars not unworthy of more detail than our space or our object will here admit of. The *art* of cookery in this country may be dated from the Norman conquest ; our Saxon ancestors appear to have distinguished themselves for the excess rather than for the quality of their food ; whilst the Normans, as William of Malmesbury expressly states, were delicate in the choice of meats and drinks, seldom exceeded the bounds of temperance, and, whilst living less expensively, lived also with more elegance. John of Salisbury mentions that he was present at a great entertainment where there were served up the choicest luxuries of Babylon and Constantinople, of Palestine and Alexandria, of Tripoli, Syria, and Phœnicia. These delicacies of course could only be obtained at a great expenditure ; and must have required cooks capable of doing them justice. Such *artists* were so very highly esteemed, that estates were *granted* them to be held by the tenure of dressing a particular dish. One of the most striking evidences of the magnificence of the feasts of the

Norman court, is daily before our eyes, in that finest of European halls, the one at Westminster ; which, we are told by Stow, was built by William Rufus for his dining-room. As we approach nearer to the period of the ‘Canterbury Tales,’ we find the love of display, or of hospitality, or of good living, or perhaps of all combined, more and more apparent in the banquets of the court, and of many of the principal nobles of the country. At the marriage feast of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, in 1243, thirty thousand dishes were served up ; and upon a similar occasion, the marriage of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III., thirty courses were included in the bill of fare. But such enjoyments, if enjoyments they can be called, were no longer confined to the king or his nobles, or even to the lesser gentry of the country ; for, in the seventeenth year of Edward’s reign, rules were established, forbidding any *common* man from having *dainty dishes* at his table, or costly drink. Cookery had indeed become a most complicated and artificial system, as the details we possess clearly prove ; and the cook, himself, a person of sufficient importance to be introduced as one of the pilgrims to Canterbury. Here is Chaucer’s description of him :—

“ A Cook they hadden with them for the nones,*
 To boil the chickens, and the marrow bones,
 And poudre marchant tart, and galingale.†
 Well coude he know a draught of London ale.
 He coude roast, and seethe, and broil, and fry,
 Maken mortrewès, and well bake a pie ;
 (But great harm was it, as it thoughte me,
 That on his shin a mormal‡ hadde he ;)
 For blanc-manger that made he with the best.”

* For the occasion.

† Sweet cypress.

‡ Gangren

In the dishes here enumerated we have doubtless an epitome of the taste of the middle, perhaps also of the higher classes, at the period, in cookery; though of the nature of the marchant tart spoken of in the third line we are ignorant. Mortrewès, we find from a printed MS. of the Royal Society on 'Ancient Cookery,' consisted of pork or other meat brayed in a mortar, (in the French, *une mortreuse*, and hence the name), mixed with milk, eggs, spices, &c., and coloured very deep with saffron. As to the blanc-manger, for which it seems the cook was particularly famous, we need only say that the following recipe for making it, which we have found in a curious little volume in the British Museum bearing the title of 'A Proper new Booke of Cookery,' and dated 1575, will, we presume, be new to the culinary artists of the present day:—"Take a capon and cut out the braune of him *alive*, and parboyle the braune tyll the flesh come from the boone, and then dry him as dry as you can, in a fayre clothe; then take a payre of cardes, and card him as small as possible; and then take a pottell of milke, and a pottell of creame, and halfe a pound of rye flower, and your carded brawen of the capon, and put all into a panne, and styr it altogether, and set it upon the fyre, and when it beginneth to boyle put therto halfe a pound of beaten sugar, and a saucer full of roose water, and so let it boyle tyll it be very thicke; then put it into a charger till it be colde," &c. As it is remarked, that our Cook is a thorough judge of London ale, it should seem that the metropolitan *breweries* were in particular esteem; and the *supposition* is borne out by the circumstance mentioned by Tyrrwhitt, in his note on this passage,

in his edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' that in the accounts of the feast given by Archbishop Warham in 1504, London ale was then priced 5s. a barrel more than that of Kent.

We should fear the Cook has not much enjoyed, even if he has at all listened to, the glowing poetry of the Knight's tale; but the very free stories told by the Miller and the Reeve, which immediately follow, are evidently greatly to his taste: the latter, indeed, has scarcely finished, before he marked his approval very significantly—

"He clawed [or clapped] him on the back;"
and immediately offers, unasked, to tell a tale of

"A little jape that fell in our city."

Some pleasant bantering now ensues between the Host and the Cook. The Host accedes to the offer.

"Now tell on, Roger, and look that it be good;
For many a *pasty* hast thou letten blood,
And many a Jack of Dover hast thou sold
That hath been twiès hot and twiès cold;
Of many a pilgrim hast thou Christe's curse,
For of thy parsley yet fare they the worse,
That they have eaten in thy stubble-geese;
For in thy shop go'th many a fliè loose.
Now tell on, gentle Roger, by thy name;
But yet, I pray thee, be not wrath for game;
A man may say full sooth in game and play.
Thou say'st full sooth, quod Roger, by my fay.
But sooth play *quade* play,* as the Fleming saith;
And therefore, Harry Bailly, by thy faith,
Be thou not wroth, or we departen here,
Though that my tale be of an hosteler."

* Bad play. Mr. Tyrwhitt, on the strength of a single manuscript, spoils the line by giving *two* Flemish words—*sooth* play, *quade spel*, or bad play.

The tale begun by the Cook, but left unfinished, as though the mental exertion was too much for one of his habits, relates to a dissolute apprentice, of whom we learn little more than the character which we have already transcribed.

The pilgrims continue their journey; the tales, now of the broadest humour, now of the deepest pathos, follow in regular succession; but intellectual enjoyments alone are far from satisfactory to the Cook. He accordingly applies himself to a more accustomed, and, to him, more substantial pleasure; what this is, the ensuing extracts will show. At the conclusion of the Canon Yeoman's tale, the Host looking back, sees the Cook fast asleep upon his horse:

"Then 'gan our Host to jape and to play;
And saide, Sirs, what? Dun is in the mire.
Is there no man for prayere ne for hire
That will awaken our fellow behind?
A thief him might full lightly rob and bind:
See, how he nappeth, see, for cockes bones,
As he would fallen from his horse at ones:
Is that a cook of London, with mischance?
Do him come forth; he knoweth his penance;
For he shall tell a tale, by my fay,
Although it be not worth a bottle hay.
Awake, thou Cook, quod he; God give thee sorrow.
What aileth thee to sleepen by the morrow?
Hast thou been fleen all night, or art thou drunk?"

He is awakened, looking "full pale," and excuses himself by saying,

"—there is fall on me such heaviness,
N'ot I nat why,* that me were liever to sleep,
Than the best gallon wine that is in Cheap."

* Nor know I why.

The Host has determined that he shall now tell a tale by way of penance; but the Manciple offers to undertake that task for him, saying,

“See how he gapeth, lo, this drunken wight,
As though he would us swallow anon right.
Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father kin :
The devil of helle set his foot therein !
Thy cursèd breath infecten will us all.
Fye, stinking swine, fye, foul may thee befall.
A taketh heed, Sirs, of this lusty man.
Now, sweete Sir, will ye joust at the fan ?
Thereto, me thinketh, ye be well yshape.”

It is but too true,—the Cook is drunk; and at last, vexed by the jibes of the Manciple, and his own inability to answer him in his present state, “he ’gan nod fast,” and fell from his horse :

“Whereas he lay, till that men him up-took :
This was a fair chevachie* of a cook.
Alas ! that he ne had held him by his ladle !
And ere that he again were in the saddle,
There was great shoving bothe to and fro,
To lift him up, and muchel care and woe.”

The humorous Host now reminds the Manciple that the Cook, another day, will be revenged for this. “I mean,” he says,

“He speaken will of smalle things,
As for to pinchen at thy reckonings,
That were not honest, if it came to proof.”

The Manciple, as an officer who had the care of purchasing victuals for an inn of court, might have had transactions with the Cook not very creditable. He is frightened, at all events,—

“I would not wrathen him, so may I thrive;”

* Chivalric expedition.

and, with admirable judgment, determines how to make peace :

“ I have here in my gourd
A draught of wine, yea, of a ripe grape ;
And right anon ye shall seën a good jape.
This Cook shall drink thereof, if that I may ;
Up' paine of my life, he will not say nay.
And certainly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessél the Cook drank fast (alas !
What needeth it ?—he drank enough before).”

This was medicine after Harry Bailly's own heart ; who began

“ to laughen wondrous loud,
And said, I see well it is necessary
Where that we go, good drink with us to carry ;
For that will turnen rancour and disease
To accord and love, and many a wrong appease.
O Bacchus, Bacchus ! blessed be thy name,
That canst so turnen earnest into game ;
Worship and thanks be to thy deity.”

But the Host remembers he is getting somewhat into the heroics. So he abruptly concludes by observing,

“ Of that mattér ye get no more from me.”

We have seen that the Cook kept a shop in the metropolis ; but *where* we are not informed. In the time of Henry II., a favourite place for such savoury establishments was the banks of the Thames, in the neighbourhood of London Bridge.

“ There is in London,” says Becket's Secretary, Fitz-Stephen, “ upon the river's bank, a public place of cookery, between the ships laden with wine, and the wines laid up in cellars to be sold. There ye *may call* for any dish of meat, roast, fried, or *sodden* ; fish, both small and great ; ordinary flesh

for the poorer sort, and more dainty for the rich, as venison and fowl. If friends come on a sudden, wearied with travel, to a citizen's house, and they be loth to wait for curious preparations and dressings of fresh meat, the servants give them water to wash, and bread to stay their stomach, and in the mean time go to the water side, where all things are at hand answerable for their desire. Whatsoever multitude either of soldiers or other strangers enter into the city at any hour, day or night, or else are about to depart, they may turn in, bait there, and refresh themselves to their content, and so avoid long fasting, and not go away without their dinner. If any desire to fit their dainty tooth, they need not to long for the *accipenser* or any other bird; no, not the rare Godwit of Ionia. This public victualling place is very convenient, and belongs to the city.”*

THE WIFE OF BATH.

THE masculine character of “this fair but not bashful pilgrim,” as Mr. Todd calls the Wife of Bath, is happily shown by the artist of the drawing in the Sutherland manuscript, who represents her, like the Prioress and the Nun, on horseback; but not, like them, riding in the modern way. At the same time he has remembered she *was* fair, and accordingly represented her with a very winning countenance, which is advantageously set off by her remarkably large and broad black hat. Her wimple is not unlike what we should call a mob-cap. Her fote-mantel, or outer petticoat, is blue, and is bound

* Stow's translation.



The Wife of Bath.

ound the hips by a golden girdle, from which it
 lls over her feet, so as to hide the scarlet "hosen."
 ne of her spurs alone is there visible. The stirrup
 her saddle is gilded, and she holds in her hand a
 hip. From such a picture our reader will expect
 original of some wealth and consequence; and
 ie Wife of Bath, as Chaucer has described her,
 ill not disappoint them :

" A good Wife was there of besidè Bath ;
 But she was somdel deaf, and that was scathe ;*
 Of cloth making she hadde such a haunt,†
 She passèd them of Ipres and of Ghent.
 In all the parish, wife ne was there none,
 That to the offering before her shoulde gone ;
 And if there did, certáin so wroth was she,
 That she was out of alle charity.
 Her coverchiefs weren full fine of ground,
 I durste swear they weigheden a pound,
 That on the Sunday were upon her head.
 Her hosen weren of fine scarlet red,
 Full strait ytyed, and shoes full moist ‡ and new.
 Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.
 She was a worthy woman all her live ;
 Husbands at the church-door had she had five,
 Withouten other company in youth ;
 But thereof needeth not to speak as nouthe.§
 And thriès had she been at Jerusalem.
 She hadde passèd many a strangè stream.
 At Romè she had been, and at Bologne,
 In Galice at St. James, and at Cologne ;
 She coude much of wandering by the way.

* Hurtful or bad.

† Custom.

‡ Fresh. In the Manciple's prologue we have the word
 sed in a similar sense to distinguish fresh from old ale.

§ Now.

Upon an ambler easily she sat,
 Ywimpled well,* and on her head a hat,
 As broad as is a buckler or a targe.
 A fote-mantel † about her hippes large ;
 And on her feet a pair of spurres sharp.
 In fellowship well could she laugh and carp.
 Of remedies of love she knew perchance."

Bath, we need scarcely observe, was formerly very famous for its cloth manufacture. The cloth chiefly made in England at this early period was of a coarse kind, which was produced in sufficient quantity to export: the finer cloths it was usual to import, chiefly from Flanders. In 1261 an attempt was made by Henry III. to prevent the exportation of English wool, and to cause cloth of English manufacture alone to be used in this country, but with little success. Soon after a scarcity of woad for the purposes of dyeing occurred, and the unusual spectacle of persons of rank and wealth dressed in cloth of the natural colour of the wool, was seen about the streets of our large towns. The great baron, Simon de Montfort, was an admirer of this simplicity in dress, and was accustomed to maintain that foreign commerce was unnecessary. His conqueror, Edward I., appears to have had similar views, and to have adopted very vexatious modes of carrying them into effect; such, for instance, as issuing an order that all foreign merchants should sell their goods within forty days after their arrival.

In Chaucer's lifetime, Edward III. made an equally petty and annoying regulation, when he

* Well covered about the neck with her wimple

† Supposed to be a sort of riding petticoat.

insisted upon a prescribed measure being adopted for all foreign cloths wherever made, and directed his "aulnagers" to seize for his use all those that should be found of different dimensions. From the little trait of the Wife's character given in the lines referring to her want of charity, if any of her female neighbours ventured to take precedence in going to "offerings" or (no doubt) elsewhere, we may be sure the Wife of Bath would look with no very favourable eyes on these foreign interlopers; indebted though she was, in common with all of her trade, to a couple of foreigners, for the great extension of the English woollen manufacture which took place in the early part of the fourteenth century. Edward III. having made most advantageous offers to foreign cloth-workers and others, two weavers from Brabant came over in 1331, and settled at York. By their superior skill, and by their willingness to communicate what they knew to others, a great impulse was given to native talent and industry.

In mentioning the number of husbands the Wife of Bath has had, the poet incidentally refers to a curious old marriage custom. Formerly the bride and bridegroom stayed at the church porch during the earlier portion of the ceremony; and it was not till the clergyman had read the part which is now followed by his going up to the altar and repeating the psalm, that they entered the sacred edifice. "At the southern entrance of Norwich cathedral," says Warton, "a representation of the espousals, or sacrament of marriage, is carved in stone;" for here the hands of the couple were joined by the priest, and great part of the service performed. Here also the bride was endowed with



what was called *Dos ad ostium ecclesiæ*. This ceremony is exhibited in a curious old picture engraved by Mr. Walpole; where King Henry VI. is married to his queen, standing at the façade or western portal of a magnificent Gothic church. The entire form of matrimony also, as celebrated at the church door, is described in certain Missals referring respectively to the cathedrals of Hereford and Salisbury.

THE END.

